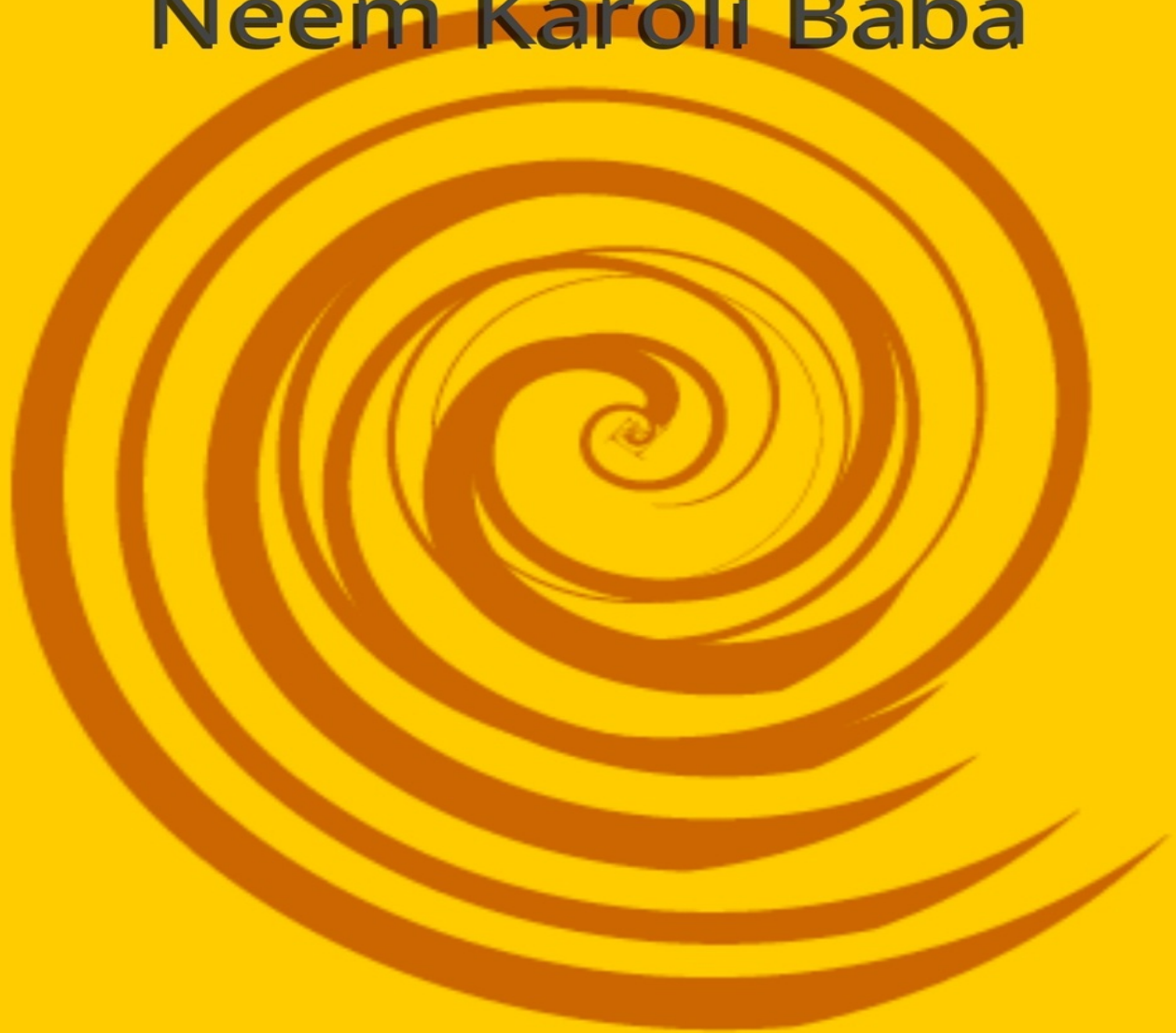


MAA-MAHARAJ- JI'S GRACE

**Blessings of Siddhi Maa and
Neem Karoli Baba**



Amit Zutshi

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Maruti Prakash Publications



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CONTENTS

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Preface](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[Dedications](#)

[A. Introduction & Background](#)

[1. The Journey Restarts](#)

[2. Maa-Maharaj](#)

[3. The Initiation](#)

[B. The Insights](#)

[4. The Right Wish](#)

[5. Each Loves In Their Own Way](#)

[6. Have Patience](#)

[7. Healing](#)

[8. Walking On Sword's Edge](#)

[9. Get Married](#)

[10. Guru Knows Everything](#)

[11. Spiritualise Life](#)

[12. Service](#)

[13. Contentment](#)

[14. Do Paath and Tell Maharaj-ji](#)

[C. The Journey Continues](#)

[15. Journey Continues](#)

[16. Citations](#)

[17. References](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[About The Author](#)

[Acknowledgement](#)

PREFACE

Some people wonder - why do Hindus have so many scriptures and books when they believe Truth is One. Why not just have one book that has all the Truth written and expressed in it. From my perspective, The Truth is One; but it can be expressed in different ways, and can be reached by different paths. Each one of us understand by different means; some understand by parables and stories; some by verses, phrases and words; some by pictures and so on. Hence, Hindu scriptures and books try to tell the same Truth in different ways in order to make it easier for people to understand and realise it.

Similarly, there are so many books on Maa-Maharaj-ji (Siddhi Maa and Neem Karoli Baba); each giving their own flavour and perspective of who Maa-Maharaj-ji are, Their sayings and Their divine plays. This book is about how I see Maa-Maharaj-ji as and try to decipher the deeper meaning of some of Their words and sayings. I have also tried to show some glimpse of the immense grace They have bestowed on me in this lifetime.

- Ram Ram



EPIGRAPH

Aum.

Asato ma sad-gamaya;
Tamaso ma jyotir-gamaya;
Mrityor-ma amrutam gamaya.

Aum.

Shanti, shanti shanti.

Aum.

Lead me from unreal to real;
Lead me from darkness to light;
Lead me from death to immortality.

Aum.

Peace, Peace, Peace.

- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad || 1.3.28 ||



DEDICATIONS

This book is dedicated to my Guru Siddhi Maa and Neem Karoli Baba whose Light has been illuminating and guiding souls on path of spirituality and God realisation.



I also dedicate this book to my father Prakash Nath Zutshi who sowed the first seed of spirituality in me in this lifetime.



♦ ♦ ♦

A. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

♦ ♦ ♦

Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

1. THE JOURNEY RESTARTS



My spiritual journey restarted when my father passed away in 2016. Why I say restarted is because I believe, we are all on spiritual journey whether we know it or not; journey towards that ultimate bliss, that lasting pleasure and happiness, that ultimate perfection, that some call by the name of

Brahman; each following different paths to reach there over one or several lifetimes. For a few, this journey starts in early years of their lives - they know why they are here in this life; but for most, it is some incident or tragedy in their lives that makes them look seriously towards this path. For me, it was my father's passing away.

Not many know that I ran away from my home when I was around 11 years old. My father was the one who found me and brought me back. He was the reason I lived in that house as long as I did. My elder brother died only after a few days of being born. In fact, my father is the reason that I am still alive. Even though I have a mother, but motherly love was only given by my father.

After his death, I began to feel angry, sad and was in distress; the person who had given me motherly love all my life was gone. My wife Manini, who works as community counsellor, suggested that I go and see a counsellor since she was too close to me to be able to take me as a client or a subject. It is like a brain surgeon cannot do brain surgery of his own family as he or she is too close and emotionally involved with the patient. Nevertheless, I thought that I do not need to see anyone, since I am a man – I can handle things on my own and soldier on. But I was wrong. Even though my wife gave me tips from time to time, I did not estimate the extent of sadness in me and the feelings I was going through.

Then it became worse. I live with my wife in Australia for past 17 years. When in December of 2017, we arrived in Delhi, we heard that Siddhi Maa has left Her mortal body. We reached Rishikesh [\[1\]](#) as soon as possible to where Her last rites were being performed. I was numb and in-shock. To me, I lost both my mothers within a short period; my father who gave me motherly love in material world and Siddhi Maa who gave me unconditional motherly love.

I slowly started to withdraw inside and my work-life started to get affected. My father had a stroke in 2012. Since I was not allowed to come back to India and stay with my father, I tried visiting him 3 to 4 times a year. I was also sending money regularly to my mother as per her wishes. Even though, I was earning enough, my expenses were now more than what I was earning. Soon, my savings depleted and I was in debt with all my credit cards overdrawn. I had also gained a lot of weight over the years due to stress given by my side of immediate family - the financial strain just added to my current woes.

The only people who have ever helped me financially, emotionally and spiritually, since my childhood were my father and Siddhi Maa. Rest of my blood relatives only know either how to take things from others or do lip-service

that makes them look good. Similar to what had happened in previous years, no help came from them as well.

My mother, around the same time, decided that she does not want to meet or talk to me any more since I did not have enough money to give her; hence of no use to her. Relation with my sister had long broken since she had crossed the line of basic human values and human dignity. I did not want to burden my mother-in-law and take money from her. She hardly had any source of income left since the sudden demise of my father-in-law a few years back.

My wife's assets were mostly taken by my mother just after our marriage, so did not have enough to sell and pay off the debts from that front too. Nevertheless, my wife Manini stood by me through thick and thin and looked after the house, her job and of course, me. The strain and stress effected her health adversely too. Meanwhile, I was getting angrier - why I was in this situation and why this was happening to me. Both my physical and mental health were deteriorating fast.

One day, I remembered a parable called 'the poisoned arrow', originally narrated by Gautama Buddha^[2]. The gist of parable was that when a person is shot with an arrow, if he spends time waiting and investigating who has shot the arrow, why was the arrow shot, why did the arrow not hit anyone else, why am I in this situation, etc. instead of removing the arrow and seeing the doctor to get heal first, the man would die.

So, the first step was to fix the financial debt that were ballooning now. We sold the house we were living in. It was a hard decision as this was the first house we had bought together after we had been renting for many years. With the sale of the house, we paid off the debts that were getting accrued on the credit cards. After paying the remaining mortgage amount to the bank, we went back to renting.

For me, maybe, I started to fix the life or take out the arrow a bit too late. My mental and physical health had effected my work and I had to leave the job that I loved and was passionate about. Along with this, I had to let go off my career of more than 24 years and my position in the company I had been working with for the past 9 years. We lived on whatever little amount that was left after the sale of our house.

One day, I was lamenting to my wife Manini that even Maa-Maharaj-ji have left me (to me Siddhi Maa and Neem Karoli Baba are one and the same - to me

They are Maa-Maharaj-ji). Then my wife reminded me of a couple of incidents that had happened in our life and how Maa-Maharaj-ji's grace saved us and how Their grace was working and still with us. It was Their grace that we still have roof on our heads, food in our plates and of course each other. I looked back from start of my life and realised what my wife was saying was true. Maa-Maharaj-ji's grace was always there in my life; in our life.

It also reminded me of a verse from book of Deuteronomy^[3]. The book of Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Torah, and the fifth book of the Christian Old Testament.

*The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you;
he will never leave you nor forsake you.*

*Do not be afraid;
do not be discouraged*

- Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

Maa-Maharaj-ji were always with me - guiding and getting me through my difficult times; warning me of the dangers ahead; showing and hinting about people's real intentions; but I was too much involved in myself to pick the signs and probably listen to Them.



Once me and my wife were visiting Kainchi temple and ashram^[4] during one of the Indian winter times. We were having a private audience with Siddhi Maa and Jaya didi (Jaya Prasada, or as my father used to address her as *chota sant* or little saint - due to her dedication and service to Siddhi Maa and Jivanti Maa. She has recently authored *Sri Siddhi Ma: The Story of Neem Karoli Baba's Spiritual Legacy* giving a glimpse into life of Siddhi Maa and her own transformation and journey).

Out of blue, Jaya didi said that I should write about Maharaj-ji. I did not speak anything at that time but just smiled and nodded; bemused at the suggestion as who was I to write about Maharaj-ji. What does a drop of ocean know about the ocean to write anything about it. Besides, I had only written a few technology related computing documents during my work life and a 400 plus pages research thesis as part of the Masters in Computing by Research that I did during my university days.

When my wife mentioned about the grace of Maa-Maharaj-ji in our lives, I

made some notes of the major incidents in my life. They outlined on how Maa-Maharaj-ji's grace helped me to get over the difficult times and what I have heard, learnt and understood from Maa-Maharaj-ji over the years. This compilation is just a few pages out of those notes. Probably, Jaya didi was hinting at the current compilation when she said that I should write about Maharaj-ji. I take it as a tacit approval from Maa-Maharaj-ji to write about Them into this short book.



This book is not my autobiography but I have included some incidents and my personal experiences that are relevant. Experiences and leanings are too many; some are generic while some are too personal to share. The understanding of what Maa-Maharaj-ji have said and meant is based on my limited knowledge and association with Maa-Maharaj-ji over 40 plus years in this lifetime.

The intention of this book is two-folds.

- Firstly, by Guru's grace one gets on to the right path sooner or later and gets strength to speak up the truth and stand up for Dharma and humanity.
- Secondly, to highlight that even what seems like mundane talks, sayings and activities of avatars, saints and such beings, have a deeper meaning and a depth in it.

I have used stories from Hindu scriptures such as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam^[5], Mahābhārata^[6], Rāmāyana^[7], and many others; some personal anecdotes and parables that I have heard or read over the years and some personal experiences to support my understanding. Some may disagree or differ with what I have written and understood.

What I have documented is how I see and understand from my perspective only. Each sees the same incident as per their experiences in current life, samskaras (experiences, mental impressions, and imprinting of past lifetimes) that they would have been born with, as well as people they have lived with and places they are surrounded by. So, it is possible that some readers may infer differently to what I have personally observed and understood and that is alright as well.



Thoughts are Yours

Words are Yours

Grace is Yours

Jai Gurudev

Jai Maa-Maharaj



Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

2. MAA-MAHARAJ



Gurur Brahma

Gurur Vishnu

Gurur Devo Maheshwaraha

Guru Saakshaat ParaBrahma

Tasmai Sri Gurave Namaha

Guru is Brahma The Creator

Guru is Vishnu The Preserver

Guru is Deva or heavenly being and is Maheshwara The Destroyer

Guru is the absolute Lord himself,

Salutations to that Sri Guru

What can I write about Neem Karoli Baba (or Neeb Karori Baba or as He is usually referred to as Maharaj-ji) and Siddhi Maa (or as She is lovingly referred to as Maa or Mother). To me, They are what the Vedas^[8] have referred to as Absolute Brahman. Kena Upanishad^[9] in trying to describe Brahman says :

*That which cannot be expressed by speech, but by which speech is expressed
That alone know as Brahman and not that which people here worship.*

*That which cannot be apprehended by the mind, but by which the mind is
apprehended
That alone know as Brahman and not that which people here worship.*

*That which cannot be perceived by the eye, but by which the eye is perceived
That alone know as Brahman and not that which people here worship.*

*That which cannot be heard by the ear, but by which the hearing is perceived
That alone know as Brahman and not that which people here worship.*

- Kena Upanishad || 1.5-8 ||

If the Upanishads cannot describe in words who The Brahman is; it would be difficult for me to tell who Maa and Maharaj-ji are. I can only write about how I see Them as; the same way a drop of ocean can tell about depth, nature or vastness of the ocean from its perspective.

There is a famous verse from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita^[10]

*Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bharata
Abhythanamadharmasya tadatmanam srijamyaham*

*Paritranaya sadhunam vinashay cha dushkritam
Dharmasangsthapanarthay sambhabami yuge yuge*

- Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita || 4.7-8 ||

In above, Lord Krishna has said that Lord comes and manifests Himself whenever there is decline in humanity and human values to clear its blockages and re-gravitate the direction of humanity in the direction of righteousness. He manifested as Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and as per Hindu scriptures, He will manifest again towards the end of current yuga^[11] as Lord Kalki^[12]. While these manifestations are to change the direction of humankind; Lord also manifests as various Saintly Beings.

To me Saintly Beings are the Sages such as Agastya, Valmiki, Vyasa, etc. Saints such as Saint Tulsidas^[13], Saint Kabirdas^[14], Tukaram Maharaj, Saint Eaknath, Saint Benedict of Nursia, Saint Francis de Sales, Saint John Climacus, etc., Avatars such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Shirdi Sai Baba, Bhagwan Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayi Mata, etc. These Saintly Beings manifest Themselves in different parts of the world to give direction and guidance on humanity and righteousness. In last century, He also manifested as Neem Karoli Baba and Siddhi Maa.

From my perspective, Neem Karoli Baba and Siddhi Maa are One and the same with different bodies and ways of working but manifestation of the same Absolute Brahman and I refer to Them as Maa-Maharaj-ji. Wherever, I mention Maa-Maharaj-ji in this book, I am referring to either of Them as a collection or as Neem Karoli Baba and Siddhi Maa individually. When I want to specifically emphasise on any One of Them in particular, I would refer to Them individually.



Each Saintly Being have Their own way of working. Some restrict Themselves to certain places, such as Shirdi Sai Baba mostly worked in and around Shirdi, in the state of Maharashtra, Shri Swami Samarth mostly worked in and around Akkalkot in Maharashtra, Ramakrishna Paramhansa mostly in West Bengal, Devraha Baba mostly in Vrindavan^[15], Uttar Pradesh while some like Shankaracharya, Maharaj-ji, Siddhi Maa would go around the length and breadth of the country to give out Their grace.

It is not that if a Saintly Being is restricted to a certain place then the grace would be restricted as well; Their grace would be given to people all around the world irrespective of whether the person is a devotee or not or have even met the Saintly Being in person. Some Saintly Beings do not meet anybody in person but sit in a cave in deep meditation and Their thoughts would grace all living beings; some like Devraha Baba meet people from distance and some like Maharaj-ji would go to people's houses to meet them.

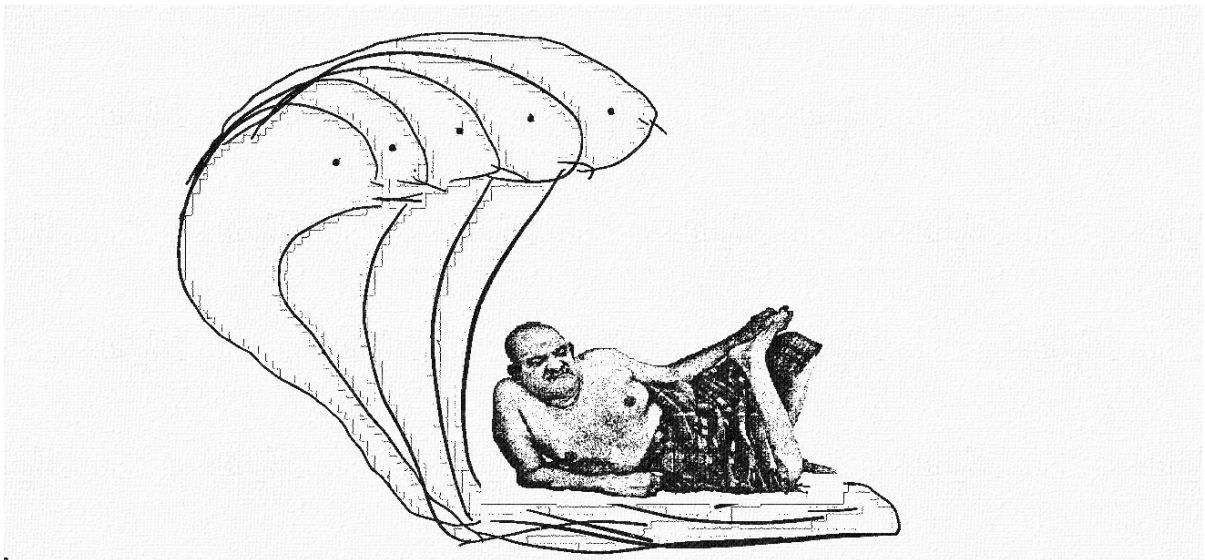
For some, They would go in person and tour the world while others would send Their ambassadors to spread Their message of universal love, human values and spirituality to the whole world. Some would give mass discourses and sermons to spread Their message, while some like Ramana Maharishi would not talk much but still the right message would be passed onto the intended person.

From my perspective, Maa-Maharaj-ji would give specific messages

individually based on what is required for a person's spiritual growth. If I take a farmer's analogy, Maa-Maharaj-ji would look at the individual's spiritual karmic impressions and sow specific seeds that could germinate while those who would give mass discourses or sermons would distribute seeds of knowledge and the germination and growth of spirituality would depend upon the quality of soil one has.

But all Saintly Beings have one thing in common; They are there to help and guide living beings to know their true-self, help them grow in life and find that permanent bliss and happiness within.

Maharaj-Ji



Impression of Maharaj-ji on Sheshanaga^[16] ; a picture of Maharaj-ji that I saw in 1980's in one of the satellite temples within the compound of Mahakaleshwar^[17] temple complex, Ujjain, India.

Sheshanaga, also known as Ananta which means eternal, endless, unbounded, illimitable or infinite. Maharaj-ji on Ananta is another representation that shows the endless, infinite, eternal nature of Maharaj-ji.

Maharaj-ji incarnated as Neem Karoli Baba around 1900's in a village called Akbarpur in the Firozabad district of Uttar Pradesh in India. Personally, I believe in what Devraha Baba said about Maharaj-ji when Maharaj-ji left His mortal

body in 1973. He said that Maharaj-ji has done this divine lila (play) many times. So, to me Maharaj-ji has always been there in this world in different garb, form and place. I would not repeat what's already described in detail about Maharaj-ji's life history in Ram Dass^[18] *'Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba* or RajiDa's (Ravi Prakash Pande) *Divine Reality: Shri Neeb Karori Ji* or *I and My Father are One* by Rabboo da (Rabboo Joshi) and interested readers can refer to these for further details.

Each one saw Maharaj-ji in the form they wanted to see. For some He is Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Hanuman or some other personification of God; for some He is an avadhuta^[19], a mystic, a jivanmukta (someone who is liberated and self-realised); for some He is a good saint; for some He is all wish-filler; for some fortune-teller, and for some He is yogi of high calibre. To me, He is always Hanuman, the eternal being who lives on till the end of this world or until the work of Lord Rama is finished. There are many lilas or divine plays of Maharaj-ji where He has displayed the Ashta Siddhis^[20] or 8 supernatural powers similar to that of Lord Hanuman, namely:

- Animā: the ability to reduce one's body to the size of an atom.
- Mahima: the ability to expand one's body to an infinitely large size.
- Garima: the ability to become heavy or dense.
- Laghima: the ability to become weightless or lighter than air.
- Prāpti: the ability to access any place in the world.
- Prākāmya: the ability to realise whatever one desires.
- Isitva: the ability to influence upon anyone or change people hearts and open it to devotion.
- Vāsītva: the ability to control all material elements or natural forces.



Hanuman singing praise of Lord Ram

Maharaj-ji did not differentiate anyone based on their caste, creed, colour, sex or status. The only thing He would look at is the heart, bhavas or emotional frame of the person who is meeting Him. He would give unconditional love without judging one's past karmas and background. He has the ability to change one's heart with love and to make it more receptive to see the positive side of humanity and bring out what's best in a person.

Maharaj-ji would not meet people as their Guru sitting on a pedestal but as part of the family and elder of the family. The devotees reciprocated His love by treating Him as elder of their family as well and shared with Him their daily problems and issues and included Him in their happy and sad times. So in the ashram He is not only our Guru but a father, grand-father for us as well.

People expect that when they meet or have visions of Maharaj-ji, He would be wearing a dhoti (garment worn on waist), a blanket and looking similar to what He looks like in His photographs. Let me share a short story that I heard when I was a school kid as it is relevant.

In Hinduism, one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu, The Preserver within the Trinity Lords (the other Trinity Lords being Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva) that represent the supreme divinity is Lord Krishna. The word Krishna in Sanskrit means "black", "dark", "dark blue" or "all attractive". Hence Lord Krishna is

usually depicted having a dark, blue or dark blue skin colour. He is often pictured having a flute and wearing a peacock-feather crown.

There was an old man who was a great devotee or bhakta of Lord Krishna. To the old man, Lord Krishna was his saviour who could solve all the issues and problems in his life. He would diligently perform all the daily rituals and follow all what's written in scriptures to please Lord Krishna. Once, there were floods in the village where the old man lived. All the houses were under water and the old man had to take shelter on the rooftop of his house. He called on to Lord Krishna, 'Dear Lord, please come and rescue me; I will wait here till you come'.

Soon, a rescue party arrived in a boat. They asked the old man to come in the boat as there is an indication that flood waters were to rise soon. The old man was happy that Lord has come to save him. Then he looked into the boat for a person with dark, blue or dark blue skin colour with a flute and wearing a peacock-feather on his body but could not find one. So the old man said to the rescue party, 'I am waiting for Krishna to come and rescue me; I would only go with Him. Just make sure to visit my next door neighbour who has been calling for help since morning'. The rescue party tried a couple of times to convince the old man but, he stood firm on his stand to wait for Krishna. In the end the boat rescue party moved on.

After a few hours, the water-level rose higher; half of the rooftop was now under water. The old man made a plea to Lord Krishna again. -'Dear Krishna, please come fast and rescue me; I am still waiting for you here. The water level is rising fast'. As soon as the old man had finished his plea to Lord Krishna, another rescue party arrived in a helicopter. They lowered a ladder from the helicopter and a man came down with it. He said that he has come to rescue the old man.

The old man looked at his prospective rescuer; he was neither dark nor having a peacock-feather or flute. The old man asked whether anyone in helicopter has dark, blue or dark blue skin colour with a flute or a having peacock-feather. When his rescuer responded in negative; the old man said the same thing as before – 'I am waiting for Krishna to come. I won't leave without Him'. His prospective rescuer tried a couple of times again to convince the old man but as before, he again stood firm on his stand to wait for Krishna. Soon the water-level rose above the roof of the house and the old man drowned.

Since, the old man was Lord Krishna's devotee, his soul reached Goloka^[21], the heavenly abode of Lord Krishna. When the old man saw Lord Krishna, he

complained and said, 'Lord, I called you so many times but you did not come to rescue me.' Lord Krishna replied, 'I did come twice to rescue you but you were the one who refused to come with me. Firstly, I came to rescue you in a boat but you refused. Then I came in a helicopter to rescue you but you again refused.'

The old man protested 'but Lord, none of the rescuers had dark, blue or dark blue skin colour with a flute or even wearing a peacock-feather'. Lord Krishna smiled and replied, 'That was my manifestation when I was Krishna some 5000 years ago. I am not limited by outer garb or accessories. I tried multiple time to convince you when I came to rescue you but you didn't listen'.

Similar to Lord Krishna both Maa and Maharaj-ji are not limited by Their outer garb or accessories. I have met Maharaj-ji in-person many times in this lifetime. A few times, I knew when I met Him; a couple of times, I realised it later; and there are still many times where I have met Maharaj-ji and I am still not aware it was Him. It all depends upon Maharaj-ji whether He wants you to know it was Him or not and whether He will come wearing the same outer garb (blanket, etc.) or not. This applies to Siddhi Maa as well.



For a short period of time, I helped out in office at Kainchi temple and ashram. Some people who visited the temple would come in office and ask whether we have a book on Maharaj-ji's teachings, what is the ashram's schedule such as what time is yoga in morning and timings for discourses; and of course whether they can become a member of temple and ashram. In relation to His teachings, these people would be pointed to books about Maharaj-ji's divine play or lila or incidents such as '*Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba*' by Ram Dass or Raji Da's (Ravi Prakash Pande) '*Divine Reality: Shri Neeb Karori Ji*' or journey of a devotee and grace he received in '*I and My Father are One*' by Rabboo da (Rabboo Joshi).

From my perspective, each action and word of Maharaj-ji is His teaching (and of course this applies to Siddhi Maa as well). At one level Maharaj-ji's lilas are small incidents in someone's life or a grace that someone has received but at another level all His divine plays are His teachings if one looks at them in deeper level.

But for some people, they were always looking for what's new in world of spirituality. For them what's been said is old and probably either hard to follow or not suited with their current way of living. In Hinduism, there are four Vedas,

two hundred plus Upanishads one hundred eight plus Purans, six Vedāngas (grammar, meter, phonetics, etymology, astronomy and rituals), two Epics (the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana), and unlimited number of Bhasyas (reviews and commentaries) by various authors that give out what is the right way of living and how to mitigate suffering in life.

Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita in Hinduism, Bible in Christianity, Guru Granth Sahib in Sikhism^[22], Koran in Islam, and many such texts outlining sometimes in summary and sometimes in detail on how one should live ones life and follow the path of righteous and spirituality. From my perspective, with that many texts already available giving the guidance to all, Maharaj-ji did not give out discourses or come up with new texts.

Maa-Maharaj-ji have been trying from lifetimes to veer us on the right path of life. They have promised that once They '*Hold our hands; They would not let go*'. But, I feel we all are like young kids, who at the first instance of seeing some shiny thing, leave our parents hands and run towards it. That shiny thing or maya can be a new house, job, vehicle, relationship, money, power, etc.

Sometimes Maa-Maharaj-ji would wait for us to fall while sometimes They would forcefully drags us away from it and other times just explain to us the pain and misery in running after the shiny things of the world. As a skilful parent, They know what situation and means would make us understand the dangers in running after these shiny things. But as adamant and stubborn kids we are, we keep on running after one thing to another and as a parent, They keep us getting back to the right path life-time after life-time.



For those who are interested, there is a good collection of Maharaj-ji's photos available on-line. Some of them are listed below:

- [Albums By Neem Karoli Baba photos - ImageEvent](https://imageevent.com/neemkarolibabaphotos)
(<https://imageevent.com/neemkarolibabaphotos>)

Other websites with lots of Maharaj-ji lilas, stories and photos are:

- Sri Neem Karoli Baba Maharajji (<https://maharajji.love/>)
- Maharaji (<http://www.neebkaroribaba.com/>)
- Maharaji - Taos, New Mexico, USA -Ashram & Hanuman Temple
(<https://nkbashram.org/>)

- Ram Dass - Love Serve Remember Foundation
(<https://www.ramdass.org/>)

Siddhi Maa



Impression of Siddhi Maa with Her Divine smile

*yā devī sarvabhūteṣu mātṛrūpeṇa saṁsthitā
namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namaḥ*

*Our obeisances to Her, the Devī, who abides in all beings as the mother
our bodily salutations to Her, our verbal salutations to Her, our mental
salutations to Her; our salutations again and again*

- Devīsūktam (Caṇḍīpāṭha) /
Durgāsaptasatī [\[23\]](#)

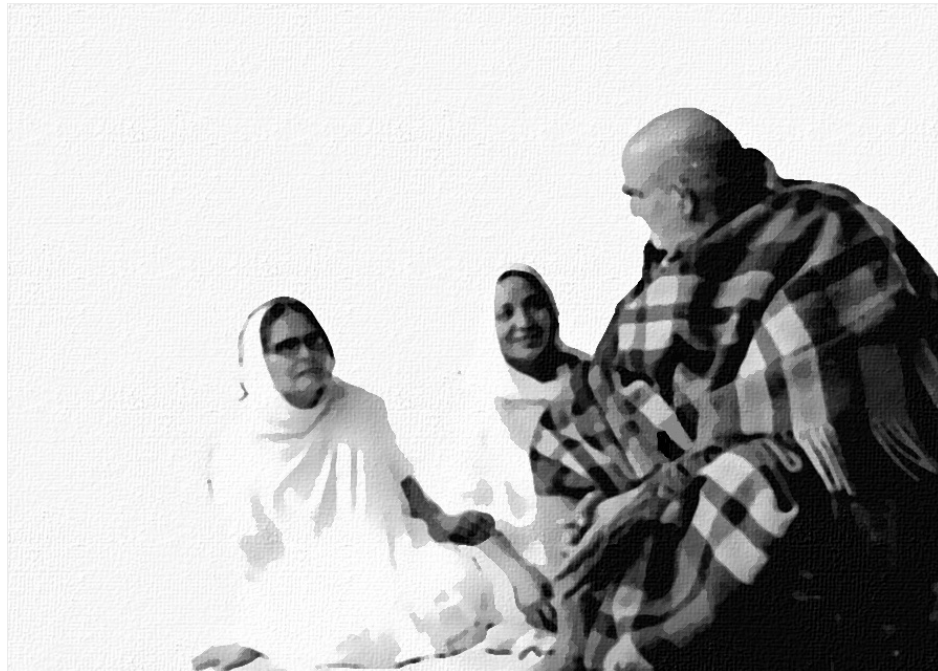
It seems like an impossible task to write about Siddhi Maa. Her glory and divinity are beyond words, phrases or quotes. Some saw Her as a great saint, some as yogini, some as successor of Neem Karoli Baba, some as Tirthankara (or liberated and enlightened one), etc.

To me, She is an incarnation of the Universal Mother; who is Mother to all beings, big or small, rich or poor, and exists in every speck and corner of this

universe. Like a mother protects her child, Maa protects us all from being getting lost in the deep depths of this world. She is the true Mother who showers selfless love upon all of us and has genuine concern for everyone's well-being irrespective whether they are humans, animals, birds, insects, plants, or nature.

As a mother, She has not only fulfilled people's wishes but also provided nourishment to their souls. Her heart of gold has been experienced by everyone who has met Her. Her kindness, compassion, thoughtfulness and humbleness are beyond comparison. Her divine aura is so blissful and has a magical power to bless, heal and comfort all who come in contact with Her.

The mortal life of where Siddhi Maa was born, Her childhood and adulthood are outlined in detail in Jaya didi's (Jaya Prasad) book *Sri Siddhi Ma: The Story of Neem Karoli Baba's Spiritual Legacy*, so I am not going to repeat what's already out there. I have tried to tell about how I see Maa.



Jivanti Maa (with glasses) along with Siddhi Maa talking to Maharaj ji
Impression created from photo provided by Vinod Joshi, Kainchi temple and ashram



I heard from many that Maa was not there in Her body in the last few years as

She was not interacting with people in Her usual normal way and was mostly silent. But, my experiences were a bit different. To give an example, once during our December visit to Kainchi temple and ashram, Maa was staying at Kainchi. During one of the darshans, we were sitting with Her on the roof-top of one of the kutirs (now that has been turned into temple of Maa). Maa seemed to be deep in meditative state. My wife addressed Maa and said something to Her.

When Maa did not react, I told my wife that maybe she needs to repeat it again and probably this time a bit louder. Maa immediately opened Her eyes and smiling repeated everything that my wife had said and answered to her query. So from my perspective, Maa was more selective towards the end of Her mortal life.



For those who are interested, there is a good collection of Siddhi Maa's photos available on the following:

<https://www.facebook.com/SriSiddhiMaKainchi/>



I will end this chapter with a couple of lines from *Vinay Chalisa*, forty verses glorifying Maharaj-ji that are sung at most of the Maharaj-ji temples.

*Śraddhā ke yeh pushp kachu, charannan dhare sambhar
Kripa sindhu guru dev prabhu, kar lijyei suvikar*

*I surrender my Trust, faith, and belief as flowers onto your feet
O' Ocean of Compassion, my Guru, my Deity, my Lord, please accept them as
my offerings*

- Vinay Chalisa



◆ ◆ ◆

Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

3. THE INITIATION



Before I write about my meeting with Siddhi Maa and my initiation into the Maa-Maharaj-ji's family, it would make sense to give a glimpse into my background and the situation I was in, just before I got initiated.

Background

A Little About Myself

My first seeds of spirituality were laid by my father. He used to buy me Amar Chitra Katha books when I was a kid. Amar Chitra Katha are pictorial story books that provide stories from Hindu mythology and scriptures, Indian historical figures and stories from various folk-tales and different cultural backgrounds. So, I grew up reading stories from Rāmāyana, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Mahābhārata, and other Hindu mythology books; life stories of Indian historical figures such as Mahatma Gandhi^[24], Subhash Chandra Bose, etc.; stories from Panchtantra (ancient Indian collection of animal fables with human virtues and vices), Aesop fables, Tenali Rama (witty jester and special advisor of king Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar), etc. that instilled morals and spiritual values in my life.

I was born in Delhi, the capital state of India in a Kashmiri^[25] pandit family from my father's side. My fore-fathers had shifted to Madhya Pradesh, a state in the middle of India more than 500 years ago from Kashmir, the northern state of India. My great grand-father moved from Madhya Pradesh and settled in a community called Dayalbagh, a locality in metropolitan Agra in one of the most populous states of India (and country subdivision in the world) Uttar Pradesh. 'Dayal' means 'Merciful' and 'Bagh' means 'Garden' or Dayalbagh which refers to "Merciful's Garden" or "Garden of the Merciful". It is a self-sustained community with its own water supply, electricity distribution and civic services. No individual owns a property in Dayalbagh. The land, houses and institutions belong to the community. People live and work together to sustain and help in each others growth.

My father, Prakash Nath Zutshi, was born in Agra to a Kashmiri Brahman family. Based on the background of self-sustained and service based community of Dayalbagh, my father strongly believed in karma yoga i.e. the path of action and service. Wikipedia defines Karma Yoga *'(or yoga of action) as one of the four classical spiritual paths in Hinduism, the others being Jnana yoga (path of knowledge), Raja Yoga (path of meditation) and Bhakti yoga (path of loving devotion to a personal god). To a karma yogi, right action is a form of prayer'*^[26]. From his early life, my father worked hard to support the family and the community. His hard working nature and dedication towards his work also helped him move up the ranks from lower levels in his office to retire as a manager.

Where I had the privilege of meeting my grand-father and grand-mother on my father's side, I did not get that same opportunity on my mother's side as she was adopted. The family who adopted my mother hailed from Lucknow, another

city in state of Uttar Pradesh in India. The adopted grand-mother had also passed away much before I was born.

Both my parents were poles apart and opposite in terms of values and ways of working. My father was a dedicated and selfless worker, spoke truth without manipulating it to suit himself or hurt another, showed perseverance when faced with hardships, owned responsibilities and not blame others for mistakes. He was big and kind hearted, what was inside his heart would be in his mannerism. He also never used occult science to influence or hurt others. Due to harsh experiences in his early life and his married life, his choice of words were usually sharp and direct. His humour was mostly dry and some people misunderstood him.

To me, he was like a ripe coconut, hard from outside and soft from heart. Personally, I prefer someone who may be hard outside but has no malice in their hearts than to those who talks nice, friendly, takes Lord's name but have malice, hurtful thoughts and intentions in their hearts against others and think how others can be used for their own advantage.



Prior To First Meeting

Now just to give background of my life situation before I had my first meeting with Maa-Maharaj-ji.

Emotional, mental or physical abuse of a person effects one deeply. It is said that mental and emotional abuse are harder to heal and take longer. Sometimes the scaring of emotional abuse can last a few lifetimes as well. When I could not take the mental and emotional abuse any more, I ran away from the home. I was around 11 years old then. My father found me and brought me back to home. I had to promise that I would not tell about this incident to anyone, not run away again and obey the rest of the family as long as my father is alive.

On that day unknowingly, my father gave mine and his control to rest of the family; a decision that he would have regretted later on in life when he had a stroke and I was not given permission to physically come and stay with him in the house.

Someone who knows our family, would see one person usually quiet and thought that it was my father who took major decisions in our life but that is not

true. There is a saying in India that '*Kabhi dekha huā aur suna huā, saab sach yeah pura sach nahi hota hai*' or *not everything that one sees or hears is truth or full truth*.

My father and I had little say in the family and all decisions thereafter were taken by others. I had to let go of my share of inheritance in my father's assets, not allowed to acknowledge my father his whole life, nor correct any rumours that were spread by rest of the family or even move back to India.

People have skeletons full of cupboard that they hide from others; while unfortunately for ours, we have house full of skeletons and probably just a clean cupboard. What people have seen over these years is that clean cupboard supported by lot's of smokes and mirrors.

I was at cross-roads and did not know what to do next. I didn't want to run away again and break the promise made to my father. Firstly, he was the one who really loved me from heart and I didn't want to hurt someone who loved me.

Secondly, there is a belief in India called '*doodh ka rinh*', which roughly translates to '*milk's debt*'. As per Hindu scriptures, we owe most to the person who provided us with milk when we were an infant. That way I had *milk's debt* towards my father, since I grew up drinking powdered milk bought by my him. So, there seemed to be no way out as I couldn't run away again and the reason behind my running away was still there.

Meanwhile, all parts of my life - from school to home, had started to get effected. I used to come in top three ranks within the grade level of my school that had around 200 students^[27] ; but now had started to come in last 20. I was never talkative but I closed up and stopped talking to people.

I was shattered and broken and there seemed no way out. When I had lost every hope of living, Siddhi Maa entered in my life.



My First Meeting

Siddhi Maa had come for a short visit with Jivanti Maa to Jaunapur temple and ashram. Jaunapur is a village located at the border of state of Harayana and Delhi. Jaunapur temple and ashram was inaugurated by Maharaj-ji in 1973. When Siddhi Maa and Jivanti Maa came to Jaunapur temple and ashram, my

father was helping in looking after the workings of the temple and ashram in those days.

Jivanti Maa or as she was lovingly called *Chhoti Maa* was a very compassionate, caring and thoughtful saint. She had eyes for details and made sure everyone was taken care of their needs when they came to visit Siddhi Maa or Maharaj-ji. I especially remember an incident in this regard. I was once visiting Siddhi Maa at Kainchi ashram along with my wife. During our stay at the ashram, I became really sick (refer *Healing* chapter). When it was time for us to leave the ashram, we went for darshan or an audience with Siddhi Maa and Chhoti Maa. Chhoti Maa gave us a box filled with special food to eat on the way back to Delhi as prasāda. Like a mother showing to her small child, Chhoti Maa lovingly showed with gestures on how I should take the food and the precautions I need to take regarding the food till I am well again.



I remember Siddhi Maa sitting in an open courtyard along with Jivanti Maa. On one side of the courtyard was a residential area where the temple workers and a few orphaned children used to live. Both the Maas met us with a motherly smile. They enquired how we were and some questions about our daily lives and health.

While we sat with the Maa's, other people started coming to see Them as well. One thing that stuck my mind was how both Siddhi Maa and Jivanti Maa were so compassionate, caring and had genuine concerns for all the people and even the animals. Siddhi Maa patted my head and said that '*I don't speak*'. Then She asked us to visit Kainchi temple and ashram for the June festival.





Kainchi temple and ashram

Kainchi temple and ashram is located in the Kumaon Hills on Nainital-Almora road in state of Uttarakhand in India. The first temple in Kainchi complex was inaugurated by Maharaj-ji on 15th June 1964. Each year, at Kainchi dham^[28], 15th June is celebrated as Pratishtha Divas or Inauguration day. All the temples at Kainchi dham (except for the temple of Siddhi Maa) were inaugurated on 15th June of different years; so each year there is a bhandara (a feast), along with special prayers. Preparations of the feast start two to three months before the 15th June, with each day increasing in fervour and activities. By 12th June, there are hundreds of people staying in and around the ashram premises who come to support and participate in the festival.

Maa-Maharaj-ji hardly slept during normal times but during these days She would not sleep at all. The high-point would be on 15th June itself. More than one hundred thousand people would come on that day to have Maharaj-ji's blessing and take the prasāda or food offered and sanctified by God that is distributed as a blessing. The devotees would patiently wait in lines that would stretch upto 2 or 3 km (up to 2 miles) on either side of the temple premises. The

local government would divert the normal traffic 10 to 15 Km before the temple and ashram premises and restrict it to local traffic movement only.

At one time, people used to sit within the ashram premises and the prasāda was served to them by an army of volunteer devotees. With the increase in number of people who were arriving for taking the prasāda, the number of hours one had to wait their turn to sit and have the prasāda increased to a couple of hours. Nowadays, the prasāda is pre-packaged for people to take it back to their homes where they can share with other members of the family and distribute some to neighbourhood as well. Some, still sit near the ashram premises while a few also attend the buffet system^[29] that is currently offered in a limited capacity.



Coming back to Maas visit to Jaunapur temple and ashram. The meeting with both the Maas was a short one, but to me it was the initiation into Maharaj-ji's family. I guess that Maharaj-ji must have wanted the initiation to be done through Siddhi Maa instead of Him; although now I know that Maa and Maharaj-ji are one and the same.

Maharaj-ji had said that - once '*He holds someone's hand, then He does not let it go*'. After the meeting with Siddhi Maa and Chhoti Maa, I could see glimpse of the above statement through the changes I saw in myself. The first change was that we used to have Maharaj-ji photographs in our house but I never connected with Him. Now, I felt that Maharaj-ji is my Guru as well.

The second change I saw within myself was that even though the abuse never stopped, I got hope and strength to live and handle the current dilemma in my life. I don't think anyone could guess (or even guess now) what I was going through internally each day but I knew that I was in good hands; sooner or later things would be all right. The third change that happened after Maas visit was that I started to talk to people again.

I will end with lines from Guru stotram about glory of the Guru that is sung at Kainchi temple and ashram and most of other temples of Maharaj-ji:

*Akhanda-Mandalakaram Vyaptam Yena Characharam
Tat-Padam Darshitam Yena Tasmai Shri-Gurave Namah*

*One who exist everywhere, is whole, is continuous and exists in moving and
not-moving*

By whom That Being becomes visible I do my Salutations to That Guru

- Vinay Chalisa





B. THE INSIGHTS



4. THE RIGHT WISH



Have savoury and tea first

I was taking my wife Manini to meet Maa-Maharaj-ji after our marriage. We hired a taxi (taxicab or cab that comes with driver and are allowed to travel interstate in India). We came to know that Maa-Maharaj-ji was staying at Bhumiyaadhar temple instead of the usual Kainchi temple and ashram at that time.

Bhumiyaadhar is a small village on the way to Nainital. Nainital is a hill station located in the Kumaon foothills of the outer Himalayas that was founded by Britishers in 1841. It quickly became a favoured place where Britishers and their families spent time to escape heat of the plains during summer times. The temple in Bhumiyaadhar is a little road-side temple of Maharaj-ji.

The premises has a temple, a small room with Maharaj-ji's blanket and tucket

(wooden bed), a room where Maa-Maharaj-ji used to live when visiting the Bhumiyaadhar temple. It also has a couple of rooms for the skeleton staff that looks after the temple and a small farmland. There is a very cute little murti (idol) of Maharaj-ji. Me and my wife usually call Him Baal-Maharaj-ji or Child-Maharaj-ji. If one happens to visit Bhumiyaadhar temple during the Indian winter season, one can see Baal-Maharaj-ji dressed up in a small cap and all the woollies as one would dress up a small doll or a child to protect from winter weather.

It is a long trip from Delhi to Bhumiyaadhar. The taxi ride usually takes about eight to ten hours. The distance is approximately 320 km (200 miles) and goes through various towns and small cities on the way. Most of the journey is in plains while the last 40 km (27 miles approx) is travelling up the mountains. We spoke about Maa-Maharaj-ji among other things. I told my wife about how Maa-Maharaj-ji knew everything including the thoughts we have. I told her that Maa-Maharaj-ji would even know what we are talking right now.

The driver of our taxi was tired of the long and tiresome journey. The treacherous roads and highways of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh that one has to drive through are not for the faint-hearted. For those who have driven on these roads would know that one has to share the roads or highways with slow moving traffic such as bullock-carts, bicycles and people, who would usually ignore the road rules. There would be people crossing the highways on foot as some of the highways go through middle of villages and towns with half-people living on one side of the highway and half on the other side.

So, to avoid fatigue and prepare for driving challenges, taxi-drivers take rest or tea breaks every few hours. Our taxi driver also stopped for some tea as he started to travel up the mountains since it required him to be extra cautious and concentrated while driving on the mountainous road.

My wife suggested that let's also have some tea and a particular brand of savoury that she could see hanging in front of the tea-shop. I was in a hurry to meet Maa-Maharaj-ji. I thought that if the driver sees us having tea as well, he would become relaxed and take additional time. So, I told Manini that let's meet Maa-Maharaj-ji first and then we will have all the teas and stuff to eat.

When we reached Bhumiyaadhar, we were received by one of the mothers who would usually accompany Maa-Maharaj-ji when she would be at Kainchi or Bhumiyaadhar. Maa-Maharaj-ji used to give opportunity to different mothers from time to time to stay with Her. Instead of going directly to Maa-Maharaj-ji,

we were asked to sit in one of the smaller rooms and told that Maa-Maharaj-ji would see us in few minutes.

Then the mother went away and came back with some tea and savoury. It was the same brand and type of savoury that my wife had earlier asked for when our taxi driver had stopped for some tea before starting to drive up the mountains. My wife looked at me in surprise. I just shook my head and said, 'I told you so, Maa-Maharaj-ji knows everything. - for next time have a right wish'. After we finished tea and savoury, we finally met Maa-Maharaj-ji. Later on, I wondered what is a right wish ?



I remember another incident at Kainchi a few years back. One of the old devotee mother of Maharaj-ji came out of where Siddhi Maa was giving darshan or audience to the devotees. She was all excited and said to me and my wife, 'go on and ask Maa for anything She will fulfil it. You can keep asking things from Her and She will keep fulfilling all your wishes'.

Maa-Maharaj-ji is like Kalpavriksha^[30], the divine tree that fulfils all the desire – one just needs to ask and the desire would be fulfilled (as long as the desire is one that will help in soul's journey or complete one's karma). If one reads Maharaj-ji lilas (stories of His divine plays) in Ram Dass's *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba* or Ravi Prakash Pande 'RajiDa' *Divine Reality: Shri Neeb Karori Ji*, one would find that Maharaj-ji was the Kalpavriksha tree for many. Maa-Maharaj-ji have fulfilled people's wishes such as marriage, children, job, getting success at business, fixing sickness, advancement in spiritual endeavour, seeing God and the list goes on. Alongside Maa-Maharaj-ji, many other saints such as Shirdi Sai Baba^[31], Akkalkot Maharaj Swami Samarth^[32], Ramakrishna Paramahansa^[33] have been fulfilling wishes of Their devotees. If Maa-Maharaj-ji and other saints can fulfil all what one asks for, then should one ask for materialistic and worldly things, spiritual things or something else.



So what is the right wish ? There are two insights that I got. Firstly, there is no right or wrong wish; all is matter of perspective. What a person sees as important and would give him or her most happiness is what one wishes for. Let me explain -

For a hungry person, food is most important thing, so he or she would wish for food, other things or wishes would not make sense for him or her. Similarly, for someone without a house, a shelter would be his most important thing; for someone who is suffering from sickness, getting well would be the most important thing or his wish. Same applies to finding a new job, or a better job, vehicle or even a better life-style. For a few, getting to know God and acquiring spiritual knowledge would be most important and probably that's what they would wish for.

Secondly, it also depends upon where one is in the journey of life. Let me explain with an incident from Swami Vivekananda's life. Swami Vivekananda was an enlightened being and the founder of Ramakrishna mission.

Ramakrishna mission is a *'worldwide, non-political, non-sectarian spiritual organisations which is engaged in various forms of humanitarian, social service activities for more than a century. Monks and lay people would jointly undertake propagation of practical vedanta ^[34], and various forms of social service, such as running hospitals, schools, colleges, hostels, rural development centres etc, and conducting massive relief and rehabilitation work for victims of earthquakes, cyclones and other calamities, in different parts of India and other countries. They conduct the service without any distinction of caste, religion or race as they see the living God in everyone^[35]* (Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, India).

Swami Vivekananda's pre-monastic name was Narendra Nath Datta. He was born into an affluent Bengali family in 1863. While studying in college, he got introduced to Ramakrishna Paramahansa who was known to be an avatar or incarnation of God. Narendra accepted Ramakrishna Paramahansa as his Guru or spiritual master after getting answers to many of his spiritual doubts.

In 1884, Narendra's father who was the sole earner of family, passed away. Due to philanthropy of his father, there was no savings in the family. The family had no other source of earnings and they were now deep in debt. Meanwhile, corrupt relatives also tried to get Narendra and his family out of their ancestral property. To help and support the family, he started looking for job. Even after trying for a few months, he could not get a job. The family was struggling to get even one meal a day.

One day Narendra decided to go to Ramakrishna Paramahansa to ask for help. He had heard that Ramakrishna Paramahansa had direct connection with Goddess Kali (Hindu Goddess who is also considered as the Divine Mother). Moreover, Ramakrishna Himself had said that He can see God face-to-face.

Narendra asked Ramakrishna Paramahansa whether He could go and ask some help from the Divine Mother and get a job or some money so that his family could get some food on their table.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa said that He does not ask for such mundane things from the Divine Mother but, if Narendra was interested, he could go directly and ask whatever he wishes for and the Divine Mother might fulfil his wishes.

Narendra was desperate. He went to Divine Mother or Goddess Kali's idol in order to pray and put his request to Her. Instead of seeing the idol, Narendra saw living, alive and conscious Goddess Kali there. In ecstasy, Narendra asked for 'divine knowledge, devotion and eternal visions of the divine Mother'; he totally forgot what he was there for. After the vision Narendra went back to Ramakrishna Paramahansa who enquired about his request for money, job, etc. to the Divine Mother. Narendra replied that he forgot to ask for those things. Ramakrishna Paramahansa asked him to try again.

Narendra tried thrice but every time he forgot to ask for money, job, etc. and instead each time asked for 'divine knowledge, devotion and eternal visions of the divine Mother'. When Narendra came back for the third time with the same answer, Ramakrishna said don't worry, your family would get basic necessities of life.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa knew that Narendra was chosen for a different destiny. Narendra's destiny was to go to west and spread the knowledge of Vedanta and Hinduism. Vivekananda himself acknowledges later on that asking for 'divine knowledge, devotion and eternal visions of the divine Mother', instead of money and job from Goddess Kali was Ramakrishna Paramahansa's play.

Similarly, from my perspective, Maharaj-ji knew about Ram Dass's (Richard Alpert) destiny. In one of the incidents in *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba*, Ram Dass goes to Maharaj-ji and asks to cleanse his heart instead of more money, etc. He had heard Maharaj-ji saying that one can realise and see God only with a clean heart. So for some, the right wish depends upon what is their journey or destiny in life.



Maa-Maharaj-ji have been fulfilling our wishes whether they are as small as a desire to eat savoury or as big as someone wishing for additional life years where the doctors have given-up hope of one's survival. Also, the right wish

depends upon where one is in the journey of life and what a person sees as important. But maybe, Maa-Maharaj-ji and other Saintly Beings fulfil their devotees wishes in the same hope as expressed by Shirdi Sai Baba.

'I give people what they want in the hope that they will begin to want what I want to give them' [\[36\]](#).

- Shirdi Sai Baba



5. EACH LOVES IN THEIR OWN WAY



Each understands their own way

Once Maa-Maharaj-ji said that 'Each one loves in their own way'. I did not understand what Maa meant. It was a short statement and I just said, 'Yes Maa'. I understood the depth of the statement quite later.

Each one of us have our own experiences, belief systems and biases that one has built over time in this life. Additionally, we have samskaras or experiences and impressions from past lives as well. Most of us pigeon-hole what we hear, see and act based on these past and present impressions, biases and experiences.

From what I understood Maa-Maharaj-ji was saying that each loves [Maharaj-ji and Maa] and shows that love in their own way based on past samskaras, current experiences and belief systems. This may not just be limited to love but also our understanding of what Maa-Maharaj-ji has done, said and

probably meant. And to extend this further, this would probably be true for any person we meet or any situation we face in life.

Let me illustrate how each one loves, understands, act and behaves in their own way with a couple of short stories.



Shirdi Sai Baba was a fakir, an ascetic who lived in early mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century in village of Shirdi in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, India. People used to call Him either Sai or just Baba. Being an ascetic, He hardly owned anything and lived on alms. As possessions, Sai had a begging bowl, a cloth bag to keep the alms and a brick that was given to Him as a blessing by His guru. In terms of clothing, Baba used to wear Kafani or a long robe that He would patch-up when it got torn.

Baba had many devotees, both rich and poor. One of Baba's rich devotee thought that his guru should wear the best and not the torn and patched-up robe that He usually wears. So next day, the rich devotee presented a cart load of clothing material to Baba so He could get someone to stitch multiple Kafanis. He wished that Baba could wear different Kafani's each day and keep some for future. Thus Baba does not have to patch any of the dress when torn. At the same time, there were some poor village devotees who offered Baba a small bag of rice and a basket of vegetables.

Sai Baba cooked a dish with the rice and vegetables that was offered by the poor village devotees. He asked someone to cut the clothing material into pieces so that they can be stitched into individual dresses. He then distributed all of the individual dress material as well as the cooked dish to the devotees who visited Him that day.

Each one of the devotees offered what they thought and understood Baba would need, thus showing their respect and love to Sai Baba in their own way.



There is a short story about a guru and his devotees. One day a guru called his devotees and gave them each some rock candy (also known as Indian sugar candy or Misri). He then instructed them to go back home and eat the rock candy. But there was a condition; that they should be all alone when they are eating the rock candy. Next day, the devotees were to come back and report on

how they carried out the instruction.

Devotees came back the next day and informed their guru on how the instructions were carried out. One said that he went home and waited for everyone to go to sleep. Once his family was asleep, he switched off all the lights in the house. He then went into his room and ate the rock candy that the guru had given. He was all alone and since there were no lights, no one could see what was eaten.

One devotee explained that he has lots of people in his house and lives in a busy neighbourhood. So he went to the nearby forest area. He went to its deepest part and underneath a big tree where even sunlight hardly comes, he decided to have the rock candy. To make sure that no one is looking and he is all alone, he even shooed away all the birds from the trees and then had the rock candy.

Another devotee said that he bought some carnival tickets for his family. When they had all gone and he was alone, he crushed the rock candy and mixed it with water and then drank it. This way no one could even guess that he had the rock candy.

There was only one devotee who came back with the rock candy and handed it back to the guru. The guru asked the devotee to explain himself - why the rock candy is still with him and not eaten as instructed. The devotee replied that he always felt the presence of guru and God with him; he felt he was never alone; hence he was could not eat the rock candy as instructed.

One instruction given by the guru was understood and acted on differently by each of the devotees. They acted based on what they thought guru had meant. Same way, when our guru or someone says something to us, it is possible that we may understand from what we think the guru or the other person is saying rather than what was really meant.



Once a school teacher called father of one of the students to update the progress. The student was not studying hard so the teacher wanted to make sure that the family is aware. This way, the teacher and family could work together to help the student. When the father arrived, the teacher said 'your son does not have enough marks to pass the school grade level. He cannot be the school topper you wanted him to be. He needs to work really hard'.

The father was smiling and nodding all this time. What the father heard was 'your son does [Bleep] have enough marks to pass the school grade level. He can[Bleep] be the school topper you want him to be. He [Bleep] works really hard'.

Most of us knowingly or unknowingly [Bleep] or leave things out and understand situations, conversations, relationship etc. based on the pigeon holes or belief systems we have built over time. To really understand what has been said by guru or as a matter-of-fact anyone else we need to keep our belief systems and ego aside and be open to listen and learn.

The father heard what he wanted to hear and believed it was coming from the teacher. So each one listens in their own way and believe what they want to believe and hear what they want to hear.



In Tulsidas Rāmāyana, there is a couplet

*Jaki Rahi Bhavana Jaisi,
Prabhu Moorat Tin Dekhi Waisi*

*How one has inner thoughts, emotions and inclination
Lord's idol is seen by the person accordingly*

Or to say simply, one sees Lord based on person's inner thoughts, emotions and inclinations.

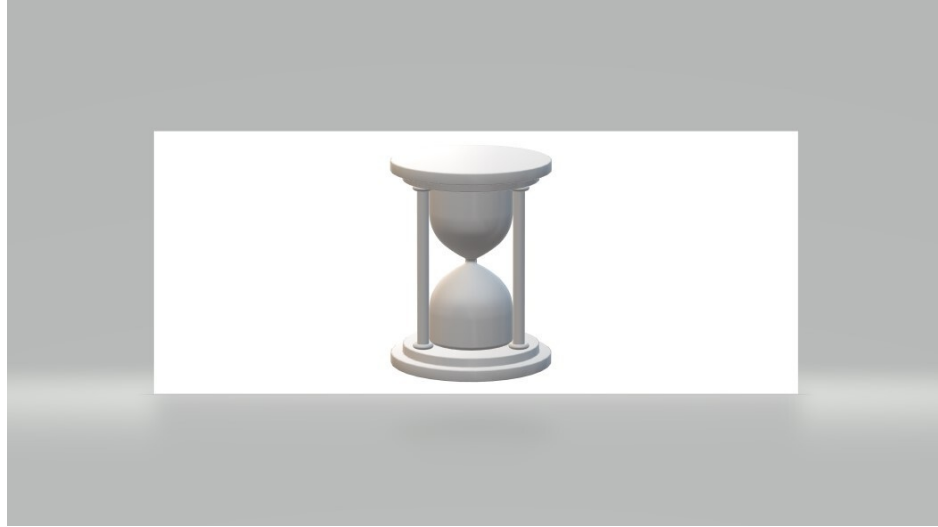


To give an example, when someone sees idol of Ganesha^[37], the elephant-headed God, different people would see Him differently. Those who are artistically inclined may look at the colours and the idol's workmanship; those with business inclination may look at the jewellery and clothes of the idol; while some may not worry about how the idol looks like or how it is adorned. Some would see a cute elephant while some would see Him as Lord. Some with Hindu background or who believes in Lord Ganesha would look at him as God while others may not find Ganesha as representation of God.

Similarly, one may see the guru based on what inner thoughts, emotions and inclinations one has. One who does not know Maharaj-ji may see Him as ordinary looking old man while one who has association with Maharaj-ji and knows about Him may see Him as incarnation of Lord Himself. Some may see Maharaj-ji as a saint, some may see Him as Avadhuta (Avadhoot or a God-realised person) and some may see Him as Shiva, Hanuman or other incarnations of God.



6. HAVE PATIENCE



Once I was going through a really tough time. Nothing was working for me and I was getting failures in all facets of life. So, when we went to Kainchi temple and ashram, I was hoping to have a private audience with Maa-Maharaj-ji. To me She was the only one who I could tell and share this problem of mine with. Who else would a child share his problems with but his Mother, who would listen and provide Her consoling words and maybe an antidote, a solution for it.

The issue was timing - it was timing of the annual June festival. As outlined in *The Initiation* chapter, each year, 15th June is celebrated as Pratishtha Divas or Inauguration day at Kainchi. By 12th June, there are hundreds of people staying in and around the ashram who come to support and participate in the festival. So, in the most busy period at Kainchi, getting to see Maa-Maharaj-ji alone is nearly

impossible. I say 'nearly impossible', because even in the midst of most hopeless situations, I have seen work completing successfully within the time-frame – so 'nearly impossible; and not 'impossible'. I had given hope of telling my problems to Maa-Maharaj-ji in-person that year.

Late one night after 15th June, someone came and said Maa-Maharaj-ji is calling you and your wife. It so happened that my wife was also coming to see me for some reason, so it saved me from the effort of searching her in Kainchi ashram premises. Everything finally seemed to be falling into right place.

Maa-Maharaj-ji was all alone when we went to meet Her. I apprised Her of the situation and how it was becoming difficult to move ahead with life. She listened attentively to me and then went quiet. I was hoping that Maa-Maharaj-ji would be thinking of some remedy that She would soon suggest and everything would be fixed. She waited for sometime and then said '*You need to have patience*'. I was taken back. My initial reaction was – that is not right; it is usually lack of faith in divine during hard times. So I said, 'No Maa, you probably mean Have Faith'. She replied with a stern voice, '*No, in this situation you need to have Patience*'. The meeting ended there.

It was a set-back for me. I was expecting Maa-Maharaj-ji would ask me to go and tell Maharaj-ji or to recite Hanuman Chalisa or something similar and once that is done, everything would be okay. I never expected Her to say '*Have Patience*'. I know all religions say that patience is a virtue but it seems to be said by someone who has not faced hard times. Patience is one of the hardest thing to practice when none of the things are going your way.

I was born in India – we have to wait in long queues for nearly everything; from buying railway tickets, catching a bus, buying groceries, etc. So from that perspective, we Indians have patience in-built. But, having patience in daily life, and having patience in difficult time is different - one difference being, we can see end of the queue when waiting patiently to get on to a bus, buying groceries, buying railway tickets, etc.

While in difficult times and in my case, I could not see the end of the queue or as you would say, light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, I didn't even know how long is the tunnel or whether I am going the right way or how many potholes, etc. were there in my path or whether there was a wall in front that I would bang into and get hurt. I still thought 'I need more faith'.



I have a backyard with a patch of grass. I usually call someone to mow my grass, but due to COVID-19^[38] lock-downs, this was not possible; meanwhile the grass had grown over 2 feet. One day, I finally decided to cut the grass myself. I thought, let me Google and check first, what would be suitable to cut such a long grass. Google suggested using a trimmer, scythe, shears, heavy-duty mower, scissors or a goat to cut such a long grass.

Due to COVID-19 lock-downs that were enforced in Melbourne, Australia, none of the shops were physically open and most had turned to selling things online. Due to sudden increase in demand, the postal and courier services were struggling to deliver express or fast delivery services as well. So calling buying a new trimmer, scythe or shears were not feasible at a short notice.

Then I thought, maybe, I can coax my local council in agreeing into owning a goat as a pet and justify it as a compensation for restricted social-interaction during the COVID-19 lock-downs. But, then I thought, getting a licence from the local council to have a goat in a suburban city house would not be an easy task, let alone a cheap one.

Only other possibility was either a paper scissor that I had or a not so powerful lawn mower that I owed. Mowing grass, even for a small patch, would be more tedious with paper scissors, so in the end, I decided to use my small not so powerful lawn-mower that was not suited for cutting such a long grass.

I had a really tough time trying to cut the grass. There is auto-switch built in the mower that stops the motor if the load is too much for the motor to handle. In my case, the motor of the mower kept on stopping every few minutes and I had to wait for it to cool down before I could start again.

Also, not just for the motor, the mower would stop as soon as the grass-catcher where the cut grass got collected, was full. Hence, I had to constantly stop to empty the grass-catcher and wait for the motor to cool down. It was really hard and tedious work. I could not go fast as engine of the mower would either burn down or breakdown and had to constantly empty the catcher as well.

Then, I had an insight. Every action or task cannot be done swiftly and quickly, some require a lot of patience and mindfulness to complete.



Consider another scenario. You have a kitchen window that overlooks your backyard. You wish that when you look outside from the kitchen window, you

are able to see some greenery, some plants with flowers and trees. You have a couple of options, the most obvious being that you plant some flowers and trees in your backyard and have a nicely mowed green grass.

You can also come up with out-of-box solution, like someone I knew had scotch-taped flowers on the their backyard window so that when they look outside, it gives an impression that they have flowers in their garden. Another out-of-box solution maybe being pasting a photograph of a nicely mowed green garden with trees and flowers on the window pane, etc.

Planting flowers and trees in the backyard with nicely mowed grass is hard work and requires a lot of patience. One would have to plan the outlay of garden, such as where to have trees, where to have the flowering plants and where and how much grass turf is required. Once the grass turf is installed or mowed, one would need to dig at places where trees and flowers were planned to be planted.

Once all that is done, trees or saplings, flower seeds or flowers from pots or tray would be sowed or planted. After planting the trees and plants or seeds are sowed, one would need to water and fertilise them regularly and take care of them from storms, strong sun and weeds. Of course, then it depends upon what seeds were planted as well. Some flowers grow in a few weeks while others like bamboo may take a few years.



Now coming back to the grass-mowing example. Consider mower to be our body, mower engine to be the mind, and the garden to be our life. If one goes too fast, then the body may break down or mind may burn out; if one goes too slow or gets digressed then, one may not accomplish what one could have achieved in this lifetime. It requires a lot of patience, faith and hard-work to build a beautiful garden of life.

Sometimes one require a lot more hard-work than patience or faith in life while other times one may require more patience. If one has seeds of marigold flowers then they start giving flowers early while if one has seeds of Kurinji Plant or Agave Americana (century plant), then they require a lot of patience and regular care before one can see it's flowers. The seeds are like our samskaras (experiences, mental impressions, and imprinting of past lifetimes), our foundations and karmas in current lifetimes; some grow up and flower early while some grow up and flower late.

There is a couplet by Kabir, the weaver saint of India:

*dheere dheere re mana,
dheere sab kuch hoye
mali seenche sou ghara,
ritu aaye phal hoye*

which translates to

*Slowly slowly, hey heart (or man),
slowly everything works
a gardener can water a tree with hundreds pots of water,
but fruits will only come when it's the right season for it.*

- Saint Kabir Das

And this is what I think Maa-Maharaj-ji was trying to tell me by saying ‘*You need to have patience*’ - some situations require swift and quick actions while some may not require any action; sometimes, actions give results straight away while for some we need a lot of patience to see the results and things manifest themselves gradually at their own pace.



I will end with a passage from Ecclesiastes^[39], one of the Ketuvim (or Writings) of the Hebrew Bible and one of the "Wisdom" books of the Christian Old Testament.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

*a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,*

*a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.*

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8(NIV)



7. HEALING



See Doctor

Once me and my wife had plans to visit Kainchi temple and ashram. It was not our usual trip during the month of June to attend and participate in the 15th June festival. We had already bought the plane tickets and were looking forward for the trip. Just before our departure, I fell sick. We knew that the trip would be strenuous and there was a possibility that my sickness may become worse; especially there was travel on a plane from Australia to India followed by the taxi trip from airport to Kainchi ashram (we usually go straight from the Delhi airport to Kainchi temple and ashram). Then, we both thought that people get better when they visit Maharaj-ji at Kainchi and there was an added bonus of a possible in-person darshan or a private audience with Siddhi Maa, so we decided against cancelling our trip.

We came directly from Delhi airport to Kainchi temple and ashram by taxi as planned. When we reached the ashram, we were delighted to know that Siddhi

Maa was still around and had not left for Her *ĕkāntavāsa*^[40] (solitude stay). We had a good darshan or audience with Maa and I apprised Her of my condition. She said that we should stay in Kainchi ashram for next couple of days. We were both happy that now I would get better.

The next day, things did not turn out as expected. I was really sick and could not stand or sit any more. I had pain all over the body; so even lying down was not very comfortable. I was given some pain-killers from the small medicine cabinet in the ashram. In the afternoon, Maa Herself came to see me and asked how I was doing. She visited me everyday for the next couple of days.

When I was a bit better, we both went to see Maa-Maharaj-ji. She told me that it was good we had both come to Kainchi as my condition would have been a lot more worse. Then Maa suggested that I go and see a local devotee who also practised Ayurveda^[41] and get some medicines from him for the problem. I did as Maa had suggested and my condition improved slowly over the year.

The next year, when we visited Maa-Maharaj-ji, She asked me to see a specific homoeopath doctor in Delhi. Maa-Maharaj-ji said that if I want to get better, I would need to make sure that I take the medicines regularly. She then asked my wife to ensure that I am complying. I wondered why Maa-Maharaj-ji was asking me to see the doctor and not just heal me Herself. If She wanted, She could have just healed me by Her ashirvad (blessings). I also believe that just by being in Her presence is enough to completely heal me.



Then I remembered a story of a saint and bag of apples. There was a saint that used to live in forest near a village. The village folks used to go to the saint from time to time to get blessings and sometimes solution for the problems they would be facing in their daily lives. Some would come and ask blessings so that their family members would recover from sickness; some would come and ask blessings for having kids; some would come for blessing for good harvest; and so on. The saint would give blessings to everyone who came to him and sometimes, also hand them some money, food, etc.

Once the saint was visited by an old man in hope of getting blessings and some financial help to put his grandson into the town school near the village. The saint blessed the old man but instead of giving him any money, handed a bag of apples. The old man was disappointed but did not say anything about his money expectations to the saint. He thanked the saint for the blessing and went

to the nearby temple and sat near it sulking. The old man thought that he had heard that the saint could read a persons heart and mind – if what was said about the saint was true, then he would have known that the old man wanted some financial help for his grandson as well.

The old man decided to go back to his place. Angry and frustrated he yanked his bag of apples. His yanking ripped the bag of apples and they fell in all the directions. One of the apples rolled next to a lady who was praying to God at the temple near where the old man was sitting.

The lady took the apple and went over to the old man and asked whether the fruit was his. When the old man replied in affirmative, the lady asked whether she could buy one from him. The old man said that if the lady wanted she could keep the whole bag for herself. The lady was very happy. She enquired why the old man was there and whether she could assist him in some way.

Old man narrated the whole incident to the lady; including how he met the saint and how he got the fruits and blessings for his grandson. The lady said that she was urgently looking for some apples. She has a sick daughter who is in need of medicine. They had seen a holistic doctor who had given a concoction that would make her daughter better. The concoction was to be taken with apple juice to give the desired result. She could not find any at the local market since it was not the season for apples. She had been pleading with God at the temple for a miracle when the old man's fruit rolled next to her.

The lady said that she would have given anything to save her daughter. Now that she knows that the old man wants his grandson to go to school, she would bear all the cost of schooling as a way of saying thanks to the old man. The old man was both astonished and surprised. He thanked the lady. In his heart he also thanked the saint for his blessings and apples; all because of which he could help the lady and daughter and secure free education for his grandson.

So why didn't the saint not just provide financial help to the old man directly ? It was not that the saint did not have any money. There were several instances where the saint had given money to needy people directly. I see this story from two perspectives. Firstly from grace perspective and secondly from karma perspective.



Saintly Beings from time-to-time bestow grace to different people and use

them as a medium to do good. They may have met the person who is graced in person or may not have met them physically. In India, I have seen and heard of many rich people building temples, hospitals, distributing clothes, etc. In nature, balance is always maintained. If one is always taking things, etc, then there comes a time when he or she has to give back what one has taken in excess in one way or another. On the other hand, if one is a giver all the time, there would come a time when one has to take help from others as well. So, the saint was gracing the lady to act as a medium to contribute back to society by way of bearing cost of the old man grandson's education.

As per Hindu philosophy, we meet the same people that we have met in previous lives and have some karma remaining or pending with. Maybe, the saint knew that there were pending karmas between the old man, his grandson, the lady and her daughter and helped them to meet and complete those karmas.

Maharaj-ji would recommend some of His devotees to go to certain doctors when they would come for His assistance in overcoming their sickness. Maybe, this way any pending karmas between the devotee and the doctor would be completed as well. Similarly, I felt that Maa-Maharaj-ji had sent me to get medicines from this devotee who practised Ayurveda and then to the homoeopath doctor as She wanted to grace the devotee who practised Ayurveda and the homoeopath doctor to act as a medium of giving back to society and finish our pending karmas as well.



Just as a side note, I told the homoeopath doctor that Siddhi Maa had sent me to him. He acknowledged Maa and said he has met Maa before. He then added that Maa has sent other people to him as well and irrespective of whatever medicine he has given to those patients, they all get well. It took me around five years but I also fully recovered.

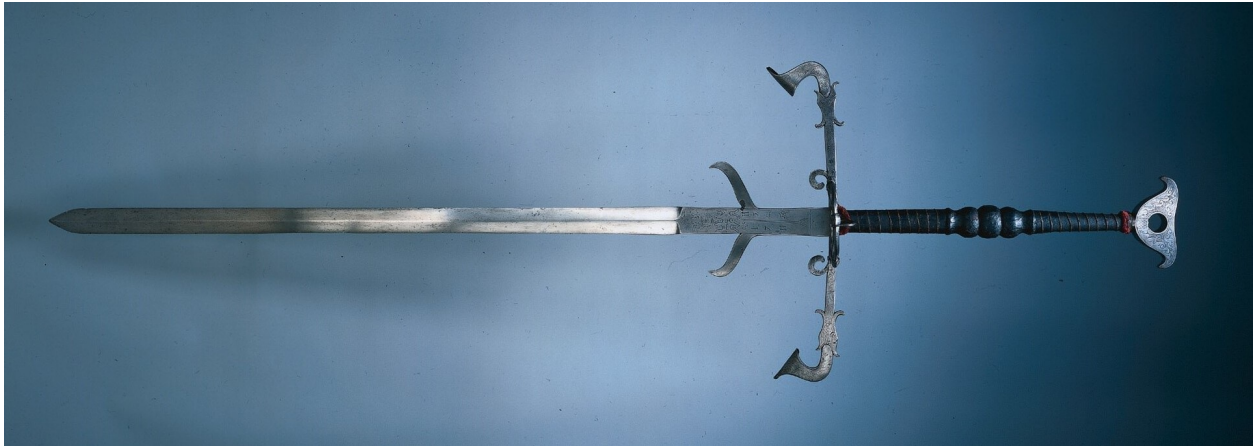


Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

8. WALKING ON SWORD'S EDGE



Once Maa-Maharaj-ji said to me that 'Life is like walking on the edge of a sword. You have to watch every step. After so many years, even I have to watch my every step'.

From my perspective, Maa-Maharaj-ji was telling us that each step, each decision that one takes, each word that one speaks, each thought that one thinks, each karma that one does in life has to be clearly and carefully weighted and then taken. One mistake, even by a realised soul, can lead to downfall in life.



We used to have Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam^[42] (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) readings during

the June festival days (Nowadays, we do not have the Bhāgavatam readings anymore). Bhāgavata Purāṇa or Bhāgavatam is written by saint Veda Vyasa around sixth century CE. It is especially revered by Hindus who believe Lord Vishnu to be the main God. Bhāgavatam discusses a wide range of topics including cosmology, astronomy, genealogy, geography, legend, music, dance, yoga and culture.

There is a story in Bhāgavatam about king Bharata, after whose name India was initially called Bharatavarsha. He was a great king and at one time ruled the world. He was a just ruler and his subjects loved him. He was both religious and spiritual. As the time progressed, he started dedicating more and more time towards thinking of God.

Like his father (King Dushyanta), he also decided to renounce his kingdom and spend rest of his years in worship and meditation on God. He handed over the kingdom to his sons and went into the forest. He chose a secluded place near a river and built a small hut. He decided to spend the rest of his life there contemplating and meditating on God each day.

One day a pregnant doe (female deer) came to drink water from the river. She heard a lion roaring nearby. In fear and panic she started to run but fell into the river. In shock, she gave birth to a fawn while in the river. The mother doe and the little fawn started to drown in the flowing waters of the river. Bharata was watching all this from the shore and jumped into the river to save both mother doe and the fawn.

He managed to save the fawn as it was nearer to him. By the time he turned towards saving the mother doe, she had already drowned. He decided that since there was no one to take care of the fawn, he would look after it and raise it.

As the days progressed, Bharata's attachment to the fawn became stronger. Day and night he could only think of the fawn – whether the fawn has eaten enough food or not, whether it is safe or not, etc. He would not let the fawn out of his sight even for a minute. Soon, instead of meditating and contemplating on God, he was spending more time thinking and looking after the fawn. In Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita, it is written,

*Yam yam vaapi smaran bhavam tyajatyante kalevaram
Tam tamevaiti Kaunteya sadaa tadbhavabhavitah*

whatever at all one is thinking, when giving up at the end of this body

certainly gets to that state of remembering, O son of Kunti (Arjun)

- Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita || 8.6 ||

As per Hindu philosophy, it is said that what one is reincarnated as in the next life is based on what one has been thinking at the time of death in current life; for example, if one is thinking of apples, then one reincarnates as a worm that eats apples; if one is thinking of God, then there is no reincarnation. When Bharata's hour of death came, he could only think of the fawn; hence he reincarnated as a deer in his next life.

In Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says that one has to work or do karma without getting attached to the work and its results. There was nothing wrong in Bharata rescuing the fawn, nursing it back to health and looking after it – it was the right and noble thing or karma to do. He had decided to follow the spiritual path and his main aim was to contemplate, worship and meditate on God for the rest of his life but instead got attached to the fawn and got digressed from his main aim in life.

And that's what I think Maa-Maharaj-ji was saying - when one's aim is to lead life in spirituality, even if one has reached highest level in spirituality, one still has to watch each karma, each action, each thought; one slip, one attachment can be a setback and divert one from reaching one's goal.



One would assume that walking on spiritual path is like walking on the edge of sword but that is true for walking on materialistic path as well. Each action, each decision (or indecision) that one takes or makes in this world has an impact on whether one would achieve one's goal in life. I heard a joke when I was a school kid. It has etched in my mind. It always reminds me of results and repercussions of not fully investigating and making careful and weighted decision in life whether spiritual or materialistic.

There was once a man who after his death arrived at Pearly Gates^[43]. He was told that because of his deeds (or because he was the one millionth soul to arrive on that day - I do not remember which one) he has a choice. He can choose whether he wants to spend time in Hell or Heaven for the rest of his stay. He would be given an option to spend a day in both before he can take the final decision of where he would like to spend rest of eternity. The man thought, who would want to spend eternity in Hell but there's no harm in looking. He chose to

spend the first day in Heaven and the next day in Hell.

His day in Heaven started with a musical performance. There was a beautiful lady playing soothing harp. He loved the slow and soothing music but after a few hours got bored so moved on to the next place within Heaven. He walked into a vast garden that had beautiful flowers of all kinds. Some were very rare. Some he had only heard of as they were extinct on Earth.

After spending an hour or so in the garden, he got bored again, so decided to move on further. The next place he visited was a golf course. He loved playing golf on Earth. Whenever he wanted to relax and get away from work, he would go off to play golf.

He started playing golf and loved it. His scores were never so good on Earth and he got a few Birdies. After a few hours of play, he even scored some Eagles and Albatross, a feat achieved by only a few in golfing professional events on Earth. After another couple of hours, he decided to move on. Everybody he met were so nice; some would come and have small chat with him; others would just smile and nod at him. Everywhere he went, it was blissful, serene and peaceful.

Next day, it was his time to spend in Hell. He was a bit wary. He had heard stories about how one is treated badly and tortured in Hell. As soon as he reached the gates of Hell, he was surprised to hear disco music. There were beautiful women and handsome men dancing. There was all kinds of drinks with a variety of beers, exquisite wine, spirits and exotic fruit juices. Not just drinks but there was a big buffet with a smorgasbord of food from different countries.

He was surprised but decided to take part in whatever was going around there. There were all kinds of games he played. They were lots of laughter and party environment everywhere he went. Everyone was eager to see that he is comfortable and people were very friendly. He could not believe his whole day went by in what seemed a couple of hours.

Next day he was asked to choose where he wants to spend the rest of eternity. The man said of course in Hell – it is such a fun place while the Heaven is nice but is boring. The next minute he was transferred into a dark place with people crying and howling for mercy. Then suddenly he felt he was in cauldron with fire burning at the bottom. Someone started poking spears at him. The man was confused. He asked - 'where are all the beautiful women and handsome men, the disco, the wine, exotic fruit juices, the tasty food and the friends I made yesterday'. He heard a voice which said - 'what you saw yesterday was just our

demo room – but this is real. Welcome to Hell'.



There are lot's of places we go and situations we face in this world that seems like real but are demo rooms of Hell. If one does not investigate the facts, is not careful or mindful in making or taking decisions or doing karma, one can end up in a real hell for a long time. Of course, for some, the time in these demo rooms of Hell can last a few days, for some a few months, for some years and for some a few lifetimes but in the end, one has to face the consequences of an unintelligent decision or karma.



If one sees Maharaj-ji's life in general, He would be constantly on the move spending some time at Kainchi, Vrindavan, Allahabad, and other places. He would regularly change places, change people who could stay with Him or He stayed with, and so on. From my perspective, Maharaj-ji would do so to show us the life of a perfect yogi; who is cautions of getting attached to one place, people, situation, atmosphere, etc. As Maharaj-ji used to say that '*A moving yogi and a moving river: impurities and sediments and filth can never settle there*'^[44].

It is not that if one is on a spiritual or materialistic path or has reached a certain level, one can become lax or negligent. That's what I think Maa-Maharaj-ji was indicating towards by saying that '*Life is like walking on the edge of a sword. You have to watch every step. After, so many years, even I have to watch my every step*'.



9. GET MARRIED



I have already got a girl for you

Marriage between man and woman is for the purpose of each partner helping to uplift the other in a commitment of divine friendship, love, and loyalty that will move both souls closer to their true nature in the incarnation they share. And it further provides the medium and right environment to invite other souls seeking rebirth on earth to come into the circle of their expanding love.

- Paramahansa Yogananda [\[45\]](#)

As per Hindu belief system, marriages are made in heaven, which means that who is going to get married to whom is already decided. Two souls get married and walk on the journey together to fulfil pending karma and help each other in reaching their life's ultimate goal. In the Hindu philosophy, life is divided into four stages called ashrams with each ashram being approximately 25 years of

age. These are:

- Brahmacharya or student, where a person concentrates on learning, studying and getting life skills for next stage or ashram;
- Gṛhastha or householder, where a person gets married and along with the partner spends time doing karma together, having kids and earning money to support ones family and society;
- Vanaprastha or forest dweller or preparation for Sannyasa where a person starts renouncing worldly things and pleasures; hands over the business, etc. to next generation. Hence, the person starts preparation for the last stage of life Sannyasa;
- Sannyasa or renunciate where a person spends and dedicates rest of the life in knowing ones' inner-self and spiritual contemplation with the aim of God realisation in the same lifetime.

Traditionally, people used to follow all the four ashrams from Brahmacharya to Gṛhastha to Vanaprastha and lastly the Sannyasa while only a few like monks, sadhus and similar, go directly from Brahmacharya to Sannyasa. However these days, only some follow parts of Brahmacharya, Gṛhastha and Vanaprastha and rarely Sannyasa ashram.

Nowadays people spend more time going outside into worldly affairs and cling to materialistic things and pleasures such as their clothes, jewellery, power, position, favourite foods, looks, vanity, etc. till the end of their lives. From my perspective, the norms of society have changed where knowing inner-self is not that important than knowing one's outer-self; hence they are not able to let go or hand over.



When I finished my studies, my father wanted me to get married. At that stage of life, I had just started working and my father had just retired from work. My priority was getting enough money to save and supplement family income than to get married.

So, during a private audience with Maa-Maharaj-ji, my father complained that I do not want to get married. Maa-Maharaj-ji looked into my eyes and with a booming voice asked 'Why?' I looked at my father, he was beaming with satisfaction. I looked back at Maa-Maharaj-ji who then in a sweet voice said, 'I

have already got a girl for you' and then told me a few things about my to-be-future wife.



When a common relative proposed Manini's (my wife's) name for marriage, I knew this was the girl Maa-Maharaj-ji was talking about. But as they say, 'to be sure; to be sure', I took my to-be-wife's photograph to Siddhi Maa. Siddhi Maa was with Jivanti Maa in Bhumiyaadhar at that time. They both looked at the photograph and smiled. They said to place the photograph under Maharaj-ji's blanket and gave Their consent for the marriage.

Most people who would consider Maa-Maharaj-ji as their Guru, get consent directly or indirectly from Them before fixing the marriage of their sons and daughters. From what I know, this is not just limited to marriage but all the important events and decisions of life such as naming of their sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, to starting new business, etc.

Our marriage was an elaborate affair. Manini's parents catered for around 500 plus guests that came to attend the wedding ceremony with each of my family member given beautiful sarees (Indian dress), gold, silver, boxes of sweets, fruit baskets, etc. as gifts. The ceremonies lasted for 3 days and there was variety of food including my favourite daal that is not usually prepared during the weddings.



Let me tell a little bit about the background of the girl that was chosen by Maa-Maharaj-ji for me before I talk about how Maa-Maharaj-ji knew the girl. My wife Manini was born and brought up in the city of Srinagar in northernmost state of India, Jammu and Kashmir to a Kashmiri Brahman couple. She is well-educated and raised with traditional Indian values such as taking care of guests and in-laws, good with hospitality, cooking, art and craft, etc. Her father, Raj Kanwal Atal was a very kind, humble and compassionate soul. He worked in medical industry. Her mother, Preeti Atal was a divine soul, great devotee of Lord Shiva and worked as a teacher as well as a home-maker. Manini also has a lovely younger brother who works in computing industry.

Being a traditional Kashmiri, they practised Shaivism^[46] as their religion. They followed most Kashmiri traditions with a focus on human values. I mention this because even though we are Kashmiri's, we hardly follow any of

the traditions and rituals that most Kashmiri's would follow. Being brought-up with humanistic values at her home, Manini chose to become a counsellor and provide pro bono counselling-services to the local community especially to those who could not afford high fees that is usually charged by counsellors or psychologist.



I knew quite early in my married life why Maa-Maharaj-ji got me married to Manini. To me Manini has been a wife with spiritual wisdom and makes sure that I do not forget the grace Maa-Maharaj-ji has bestowed on both of us. As Ramakrishna Paramhansa said, '*A wife endowed with spiritual wisdom is a real partner in life. She greatly helps her husband to follow the religious path*'. I am grateful to Maa-Maharaj-ji for bestowing Their grace on both of us and choosing the right partner for me.

Manini proved to be lucky for my family. After she became part of the family, our luck improved. My mother and father had their first trip outside India; my sister bought her first house in Australia; my mother, who I was sending money to each month, became a tax paying person for the first time even though she has never worked in her life. Instead of travelling in buses or auto-rickshaws, we started travelling in taxi-cabs. From a middle class family, we became an upper middle class from Indian standards.

When Maa-Maharaj-ji told me to get married, my mother said that she never wants me to get married . Hence, my mother and sister did not accept my wife into the family in spite of my wife's kind, compassionate and down-to-earth nature. Even though, Maa-Maharaj-ji tried multiple times to intervene and reason out but they refused to listen and even denied that Maa-Maharaj-ji was saying anything to them.

Instead, lots of rumours about me, my wife, our relationship and my in-laws were spread. Every means to break and sour our marriage have been tried over past 20 plus years. The stress they gave effected our emotional and physical health; physically, I gained a lot of weight while my wife lost a lot of weight.

I want to emphasise here that even when someone close to you such as your own blood relative or family member back-stabs and betrays you, tarnish your image in society, or try to ruin your relationship, health, job, etc. - keep remembering your Guru, your God. By the Grace of ones Guru and God, one can sustain and survive any situation in life.



When Maa-Maharaj-ji said that '*I have already got a girl for you*', I always wondered whether my wife also knew Maa-Maharaj-ji. So, after we got married, I asked Manini whether she knew Maharaj-ji. She told me that she had heard about Him when she was young. She had gone to one of their relatives place in Lucknow city when she was around 8 or 9 years of age. The relatives considered Maharaj-ji as their spiritual Guru. They used to live in a double storey house – the family stayed on the first floor of the house while one of the rooms on the ground floor of the house was dedicated to Maharaj-ji.

My wife was sent to offer obeisance to Maharaj-ji. When she went into the room; she was not sure who should she be paying obeisance to. There was no person, photograph or picture of God there. There was a tucket (wooden bed) in the middle of room with a blanket on it. There was a lota (water utensil) and a wooden stick. The blanket, wooden stick and lota were supposedly Maharaj-ji's.

When tea was made for everybody, the head of the family said that she will now go and give the tea to Maharaj-ji first before offering to everyone else. My wife (who was then a 8 or 9 years old girl), remembered thinking how would the blanket, tucket or wooden stick drink tea.

From the above incident, looks like Maa-Maharaj-ji was keeping an eye on Manini and her life from a very young age.



In Ram Dass's book, *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba*, it is mentioned that Maharaj-ji had asked some people to get married while a few not to get married. The Guru can see ones past, present and future not only of the current life but over multiple lifetimes. So if the Guru asks someone not to get married then it may be because

- sometimes marriage may not be good for the soul -Guru gives protection by asking not to get married. For example, if there is separation or abuse immediately after the marriage and the person would not get another partner or a stable partner in the current lifetime then; Guru may suggest someone not to get married. This may save the person from pain of lifetime (which may be bigger than pain of not getting married), or
- the soul may not grow, if it gets married to someone or if the soul has

already completed it's journey and is ready to move to the next level.
Like some people never get married and become renunciates and monks at a very early age.

When a Guru asks someone to get married or not to get married, it has a deeper meaning than just marriage. Maa-Maharaj-ji knows our soul journey and where we are on that journey. They may ask us to get married or not based on what They can foresee in our future and where we are in our soul's journey .

I will end here with a quote:

*The greatest thing a husband or wife can wish for the spouse is spirituality;
for soul unfoldment brings out the divine qualities of understanding, patience,
thoughtfulness, love.*

- Paramahansa Yogananda



Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

10. GURU KNOWS EVERYTHING



Guru knows everything in this cosmos

A Guru knows all what one says to others and what one actually means; one's deepest thought and even what one dreams about. Maa had answered a few of my questions that I had asked in my dreams and some of my thoughts, both of which I had not shared with anyone.

With Siddhi Maa this feeling and experience of Guru knows everything is more subtle, more individual. But with Maharaj-ji it was more open. When Maharaj-ji used to give darshans to people, He would say something that would answer someone's specific questions or dilemmas that they would be facing in life but for others, it would seem like everyday or mundane talks. To illustrate:

- when Ram Dass met Maharaj-ji for the first time; his thoughts and feelings of the night before that he had not shared with anyone were mentioned by Maharaj-ji in front of everyone. But only Ram Dass understood what was said and the others gathered there did not. He later mentioned the context to others; or
- how Larry Brilliant's^[47] questions that he had asked God in private, were answered by Maharaj-ji the next day when they met in front of people gathered there. Again only Larry understood what Maharaj-ji meant as he had not shared the questions he had asked God with anyone else.; or
- how Maharaj-ji answered one of her devotee's inner dilemma that she was facing on which boy to marry her daughter to in front of everyone gathered. Only the lady understood the context of Maharaj-ji's statement.

Details of above incidents can be found in Ram Dass's *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba*.



I will now share a couple of incidents from my life.

It was my first 15th June festival after my marriage. My mother asked my wife to stay at her parents place in Delhi while we three, my father, mother and me went to attend the June festival. My wife wanted to attend the festival as well with us but didn't share this with anyone. When we reached Kainchi temple and ashram, Siddhi Maa called all three of us. She asked where is my wife ? My mother told that my wife is staying back at her parent's house. Maa-Maharaj-ji turned to me and asked me to go back to Delhi and get her to Kainchi as soon as

I can.

When my wife met Siddhi Maa along with me the next day, Maa smiled and addressed my wife and said, *'Didn't, I do right to get you here'*. Then She addressed me and said, *'From now on, you two have to come together '*. Maa knew what my wife's wish was and fulfilled it as Guru knows everything.



Maa-Maharaj-ji used to eat prasāda or food offered and sanctified by God that is distributed as a blessing only after successful completion of the 15th June festival at Kainchi. The other devotee mothers also followed Her example and would refrain from having prasāda till Maa-Maharaj-ji would have eaten it.

One of my blood relatives, ate the prasāda with one of her friends in the ashram before Maa-Maharaj-ji had prasāda. When she came for Maa-Maharaj-ji's darshan with others, Maa-Maharaj-ji asked my blood relative whether she had prasāda. She said No, how can I have when you have not. Maa-Maharaj-ji knew that she had already taken the prasāda because of all the people only one was asked that question. It is sometimes sad to see that people lie and deceive their own Guru.



There is a Sheetala Mata temple behind Maharaj-ji's temple and ashram at Hanuman Garhi, Nainital, India. One can go and visit Sheetala Mata temple by walking on the path that goes alongside the Hanuman Garhi temple boundary wall. The path then goes towards the back of the Hanuman Garhi temple and onto the Sheetala Mata temple. Sheetala Mata is a Hindu Goddess and an incarnation of Supreme Goddess Parvati. She cures poxes, sores, ghoul, pustules and diseases, and most directly linked with the disease smallpox acclaimed by Hindus (sourced from Wikipedia).



An Impression of Sheetal Mata drawn in 1890 in Eastern India, Bengal, Kolkata, Kalighat with Watercolours, graphite, ink, and tin on paper.

Hanuman Garhi (or as was previously called Bajranga Garh) temple is located about 3.5 km from the Tallital Mall Road, Nainital in state of Uttarakhand in India. It was the first Hanuman temple built by Maharaj-ji in Uttarakhand. In addition to the Lord Hanuman temple, there is Goddess Sita Lord Ram and Lord Lakshman temple, a Goddess Parvati Lord Shiva temple, a chanting hall with Maharaj-ji's murti (idol) and many smaller temples within the temple premises.

I had never visited the Sheetal Mata temple myself. So, after marriage when me and my wife were visiting the Hanuman Garhi temple for the first time, I suggested that maybe we should go and pay a visit to Sheetal Mata. There is a sweet shop outside the Hanuman Garhi temple. We bought some sweets as an offering to Sheetal Mata and then started our track towards the temple.

As we walked past the gates of Hanuman Garhi temple, a bunch of monkeys came running towards us. Some came from the front while a couple of monkeys

came from the valley on right-side swinging from the coniferous (pine) trees. They all started to make angry noises. One of them, who looked like their leader, looked at me first and then at my wife (who was holding the box of sweets for offering at the Sheetala Mata temple). We both were frightened; we were surrounded on three sides; right and front by angry monkeys and Hanuman Garhi temple wall on left.

My wife surrendered and extended her hand that was holding the box of sweets. The leader monkey grabbed the box from my wife's hand and then all of them dispersed. We were both shocked and shaken. We both decided to abandon the idea of going to visit Sheetala Mata in-person that day and returned back.

When we reached back at Kainchi temple and ashram, we saw both Siddhi Maa and Jivanti Maa. I mentioned to Them that when we visited the Hanuman Garhi temple this time, we also decided to go to Sheetala Mata's temple. Before, I could tell Them anything else including the monkey incident, Siddhi Maa looked at my wife and said that *'It was good that you offered the sweets to the monkeys'*.

My wife asked me later how did Maa-Maharaj-ji know about the monkeys when we had not told about the incident to anyone. To date, we still wonder who those monkeys were.



Saintly Beings like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Neem Karoli Baba, Siddhi Maa, Sombari Maharaj, Shirdi Sai Baba, Devraha Baba and many more, know about each person's deepest thoughts and feelings. As one's Guru They know everything including ones' past, present and future life-times. They try to give instructions and guidance so that one would follow the path of righteousness, spirituality, and fulfil the reason for one's birth.



Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

11. SPIRITUALISE LIFE



When I first attended the Kainchi festival in the June of mid 80's, I saw that there were kirtan-walas or spiritual song singers from Vrindavan. They would be singing the 'Hare Krishna' mantra in different shifts from morning to evening. There were lectures from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa or Bhāgavatam) from morning to late afternoons. The mothers in Kainchi temple and ashram would be singing bhajans or spiritual songs, Hanuman Chalisa or taking name of Lord Ram while cutting vegetable or cooking them or even when washing dishes.

There was a continuous reading of Hanuman Chalisa where the prasāda was cooked and kept. Maa-Maharaj-ji used to encourage us to spend our time talking about Maharaj-ji or discussing and sharing His lilas or divine plays and not waste time gossiping or talking about worldly things. I have spent many beautiful moments hearing about how different devotees had met Maharaj-ji or Maa and how it has changed their lives.

From my perspective, Maa-Maharaj-ji knew that we may not be spending enough time remembering God. We all are very busy in life these days. Most of us, hardly have enough hours to do all the work or tasks that one needs to complete in a day. We usually prioritise the tasks and try to finish the most important ones first. Spirituality, remembering God or ritualistic worshipping are usually the last ones on that priority list.



From the various activities we could see and do at Kainchi temple and ashram such as listening to Bhāgavatam or spiritual lectures, singing and hearing God's name, chanting name of God while working, Maa-Maharaj-ji were showing us how to use Bhakti or devotion and Karma or service to spiritualise work and life. Maharaj-ji used to say that devotion or Bhakti and service are ways to know and see God. Ramakrishna Paramahansa have said that for this Kali Yuga or current age, Bhakti is the easiest way to achieve God.

So what is Bhakti. As per Swami Shivananda^[48], Bhakti comes from word Bhaj, which means being attached to God. As per Wikipedia, Bhakti means 'attachment, participation, fondness for, homage, faith, love, devotion, worship, purity'.

One of the concepts in Bhakti is of ajapa-japa or ajapajapam or constantly chanting God's name while doing any activity in one's life. Maharaj-ji is said to be constantly repeating the name of Lord Ram under His breath. But, reaching the state of ajapa-japa is not easy from my perspective. So what are our alternatives ?

Bhakti can be done in various forms. Srimad Bhāgavatam outlines nine forms of Bhakti (Canto 7 chapter 5 verse 23-24) :

- *Sravaṇa*: means listening and hearing of God's name or in our case taking Maharaj-ji's and Maa's name and listening to Their lilas or divine play. Siddhi Maa once said that we should '*read at least one*

lila of Maharaj-ji each day'. It is similar to concept of reading one verse a day from Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita; each time one finishes reading the whole of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita and comes back to reading the same verse again, one may get a different insight. Same way, one who read lilas of Maharaj-ji and comes back to reading it again after a couple of months, one may get a different insight into Maharaj-ji's teachings. This may also help in solving some issues and problems one may be facing at the current stage in life.

- *Kirtana*: involves singing of God's or Maharaj-ji's glories. There are many people who sing His glories, especially during the June festival. There would be kirtan-walas who would be singing 'Hare Krishna' mantra each day from morning to evening. Some of the western devotees that are professionally singing kirtans are Jai Uttal (<https://jaiuttal.com/>) and the author of *Chants of a Lifetime: Searching for a Heart of Gold*, Krishna Das (<https://www.krishnadas.com/>).
- *Smarana*: is remembering God's or Maharaj-ji's name like Sage Narada^[49] who takes name of Lord Narayana or Lord Vishnu and remembers Him every second. Maharaj-ji used to constantly repeat name of Lord Ram under His breath. Or like the old mothers in Kainchi temple and ashram taking name of Maharaj-ji or Lord Ram while cutting vegetables, washing dishes or doing daily work at the ashram.
- *Padasevana*: relates to service or touching of Lord's or Maharaj-ji's feet. From my perspective, padasevana means walking on footsteps or teachings of Maa-Maharaj-ji. Some of the teachings of Maa-Maharaj-ji are highlighted in capital letters in Ram Dass' *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba*. Also, all Their lilas in any of the books are source of Their teachings.
 - I would like to make just one point of caution here - whether we talk about teachings of Maa-Maharaj-ji or other Saintly Beings, they would all be based on basic human values. Teachings that are not based on basic human values are probably coming from ones' own ego, desires or misinterpretations.
 - For example, once a saint gave discourse to a gathering of people about detachment. He said that people should try not to be attached to the fruits of work or the work itself or the people they are working with. One of the person listening to

the discourse interpreted the part of discourse where the saint said 'do not get attached to people who you work with' as saying that he could treat people as commodity and use them for his own selfish purpose. I don't think that was the correct interpretation of detachment that the saint was talking about.

- *Archana*: is usually ritualistic worshipping of God. This may involve doing elaborate rituals such as offering of sanctified water, different kinds of foods, flowers, lighting lamps, incense, etc. with various mantras and prayers or may simply be offering of flowers and thinking of God or Maa-Maharajji.
- *Vandana*: as per Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta^[50] vandana means offering gratitude and thanks-giving to the God or one's Guru and in our case Maa-Maharajji. This may involve offering prostration and / or reciting prayers such as Vinay Chalisa before Maa-Maharajji or even just acknowledging the Blessings one has got.
- *Dasya*: involves working and performing everything as a service to God or Maa-Maharajji. I have seen this sentiment in some of the devotees of Neem Karoli Baba.
- *Sakhya*: involves treating God or Maa-Maharajji as a friend and do all the activities as one does with a friend.
- *Atmanivedana*: is complete surrender of the self to God or Maharajji. Siddhi Maa is a perfect example of Atmanivedana; Her whole life, work, mind and soul were all dedicated to Maharajji.

Personally, I have seen a combination of Bhakti and Karma yoga within a few of Neem Karoli Baba's devotees. Some of them are Vinod da (Vinod Joshi), Bhaiyu da (Pradeep Sah), Dinesh da (Dinesh Tripathi) at Kainchi temple and ashram, M P da (M P Singh) at Hanuman Garhi temple, Dinesh da (Dinesh Sharma) of Vrindavan. You can find a brief outline about them in *I and My Father are One* book by Rabboo da (Rabboo Joshi).



There is a beautiful story of sage Narada and a farmer about Bhakti. Sage Narada is a celestial being, rishi (or sage) to devas and one of the children of Lord Brahma, the Creator God. He holds a musical instrument, Veena, that He uses to sing the glories and name of Lord Narayana or Lord Vishnu, the Preserver God. He is also known to be a great bhakta or devotee.

Once, sage Narada went to Lord Vishnu and said, 'Lord, can You please tell, who is Your biggest devotee'. Narada thought Lord Vishnu would take his name as Narada was always thinking of Lord Vishnu, taking Lord's name, singing Lord's glories. Lord Vishnu said, 'There is a farmer who lives in Varanasi^[51] is my biggest devotee'.

Sage Narada was taken-aback – how is this possible ? There is no time of the day or night that he is not taking Lord's name or thinking about Him. So sage Narada half-heartily smiled and asked Lord for this farmer's address. Narada thought let me go, investigate and find out what was so special about this farmer and what is this farmer doing that makes him Lord's biggest devotee.

Sage Narada disguised himself as a traveller and knocked at the farmer's door one of the evenings. There used to be a tradition in olden times that one could go to anyone's place and ask for night shelter. People were usually nice and kind; they would give them free food and lodging if one needs it. Sage Narada asked the farmer whether he can stay for a night as it was late for him to continue on his journey. The farmer welcomed sage Narada into his home and showed him where he could sleep that night and offered him some food to eat.

Sage Narada watched every step and move of the farmer to see what makes him the biggest devotee of Lord Vishnu. The farmer had his dinner with Narada and then after bidding goodbye went to sleep in his bed. No special pujas or prayers were done in the night. Only thing that the farmer did before going to bed is took Lord's name once. When the farmer got up in the morning, he again took name of Lord; no special pujas, prayers or ceremonies or rituals were performed in the morning as well.

The farmer again took Lord's name before going to farm and just once again when he started tilling his land. Sage Narada was confused – here is this farmer who takes name of Lord once before going to bed, once after getting up, once before starting a task and only a few times during a task while here I am, Narada, who is always thinking about Lord, taking Lord's name and singing His glories; how come I am not Lord's biggest devotee while this farmer is.

Sage Narada went to Lord Vishnu and asked Him to put an end to the confusion - how come the farmer, who only takes Lord's name every now and then, be His biggest devotee. Lord Vishnu smiled and said that He would put an end to Narada's confusion soon. But first Narada has to carry a pot of water on his head and take it to Lord Shiva^[52]. Once the task is completed, Lord will help sage Narada in clearing his confusion. Sage Narada was apprehensive but agreed

to complete the task. The pot of water that was to be delivered to Lord Shiva was full up to its brim. Sage Narada was to ensure that not a single drop of water falls off the pot on his way.

Sage Narada placed the pot of water on his head and started to walk towards Lord Shiva's abode Kailasha. On the way, he met the celestial sages Sapt Rishis (Seven Sages) who asked what was he doing. Narada replied that he is very busy right now and concentrating to ensure that not a single drop falls from the pot.

So he apologised that he can't stop and talk and moved on. Next, he saw some meteors coming his way – so he had to stop to let the meteors pass; lest he might be hit by one of them and lose his balance. After the meteor shower, he continued on his journey. He heaved a sigh of relief after handing the pot to Lord Shiva.

Sage Narada reported back to Lord Vishnu and informed that he has completed the task. Lord Vishnu then asked sage Narada, how many times did he think of Lord Vishnu or took His name or sang His glories. Narada replied that he did not take Lord Vishnu's name as he was fully concentrating on making sure that no drop of water falls down from the pot.

Lord Vishnu smiled and said - that is the difference between you and the farmer. The farmer takes My name at start of each task. When you stopped for meteor shower and restarted on your way – you did not think of Me while the farmer in his busy life makes sure that he is taking My name whenever he can whether he is ploughing his field, starting or stopping his work.

Maybe we are all like bit of sage Narada in this respect. We are busy in our daily lives, trying to do our work with utmost concentration, dedication or sometimes just trying to finish the number of tasks at hand. We usually forget to take God's name. Maybe, we can try to be a little like the farmer who does not take God's name every moment of the day but makes sure to take it at least once when he gets up or goes to sleep or starts a task.



There is an age old tradition that most business community especially that of shopkeepers follow in India. Each morning when they open their shops or business, the owner would do a small puja or worship and prayer. The puja was done to acknowledge the shop or business place as the temple of God. Each person or customer would be treated as God Himself who is bestowing His grace

by visiting the business / shop or His temple. A prospective customer or person would be treated with utmost respect whether the person buys something or gives business / contract or not.

This way, each time a businessperson thinks about his business or meets a customer, he would remember God and thus spiritualise his working day. However, as the time progressed, the puja and prayer mostly gravitated towards Goddess of Wealth - Goddess Mother Lakshmi, where the businessperson would ask for Her blessings to get more money from the customer or business dealings; the underlying core concept of spiritualising work behind the puja, prayers and the intention behind the concept was forgotten.



When spiritualising work, one's attitude is also important. Take for example, a priest whose work is involved in doing pujas and prayers to God. If the priest is thinking of how much donation he or she can get from people who are coming to do puja and prayers, then his work is not spiritualised. Even though it may look like the priest is doing spiritual work whole day, but in actuality, his work is worldly.



'Spirituality has nothing to do with the atmosphere you live in. It's about the atmosphere you create within yourself'.

- Jagadish "Jaggi" Sadhguru^[53]

From my perspective, Maa-Maharaj-ji are also showing us various means that one can create that atmosphere within our self while living and working in the world.



12. SERVICE



The old mothers who were there since Maharaj-ji's time, would usually come early for the 15th June festival at Kainchi and help out in various services in the temple and ashram. They would leave only after attending the 15th June festival. Most considered helping out in the temple and ashram as their service to Maharaj-ji which they had been doing since Maharaj-ji was present in His mortal body as Neem Karoli Baba. Of course, it also gave them opportunity to spend time with Siddhi Maa.

Once during the 15th June festival, one of the old mothers fell ill. My wife was assigned to help and assist the old mother in her daily routine for the duration of her stay at the ashram. Because my wife was spending most of the day assisting the old mother she had less of an opportunity to do paath^[54], puja or

help in kitchen. She was feeling sad due to missed opportunity. Same day my wife was called by Siddhi Maa. When she went and offered her pranams or obeisance, Siddhi Maa patted her back and said that '*Selfless human service is same as doing paath and puja*'. It cleared my wife's doubt and she carried on her assigned duty wholeheartedly.



In Ram Dass's *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba*, Maharaj-ji has said that selfless human service can open ways to see God. Siddhi Maa is Herself an epitome of selfless service. She has dedicated Her whole life in service, spreading message and love of Maharaj-ji without expecting or even taking credit of the work done. Even though Maa is Herself the Universal mother, She used to say that all the work is done by Maharaj-ji - if one has any request or problems, then it should be told to Maharaj-ji because it is Him that does the work.



Selfless service is not just limited to one religious faith. Sikhism is a religious faith that was developed from the spiritual teachings of Guru Nanak^[55], the faith's first guru, and the nine Sikh gurus who succeeded Him. There is a concept of *Kar Seva* within Sikhism that is often translated as 'voluntary labour'. Sikhism stresses *kirat karō* and *vanḍ chakkō* which means, honest work and sharing what you have by giving to the needy for the benefit of the community. It is duty of every Sikh to engage in Seva or service wherever possible, such as volunteering at a Gurdwara (temple where Sikh do their prayers), community centres, senior living centres, care centres, sites of major world disasters etc.

In Baha'i^[56] faith, Abdu'l-Baha in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* have said, *nearness to God is possible through devotion to Him, ... and service to humanity*.

Mother Teresa also known as Saint Teresa of Calcutta used to perform her selfless service to all and see Christ in each and everyone. She said:

*"I see Jesus in every human being.
I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him.
This is sick Jesus.
This one has leprosy or gangrene;
I must wash him and tend to him.*

I serve because I love Jesus.”

In Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has said

*yo mām paśhyati sarvatra sarvaṁ cha mayi paśhyati
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśhyāmi sa cha me na praṇaśhyati*

He who perceives Me everywhere and beholds everything in Me
never loses sight of Me, nor do I ever lose sight of him [\[57\]](#)

- Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita || 6.30 ||

Hence serving all and seeing God in all, one can achieve God. Maharaj-ji used to say 'Service to all is atma-gyan' or knowledge of self [\[58\]](#).



Now I will share a couple of incidents from my life.

I remember as a teenager, I went to Kainchi temple and ashram for the first time. It was to attend and participate in the 15th June festival. The first major service I got was to help in the Malpuas kitchen. Malpuas or commonly known as Pua are sweets that were cooked and eaten even during the ancient times in India during festivals and celebrations. Rigveda^[59] mentions a sweet cake made of barley called apūpa^[60], where barley flour was either fried in ghee or boiled in water and dipped in sweet syrup. At Kainchi, Pua or malpua are made from wheat flour and jaggery and then deep fried in ghee. Malpuas are the main prasāda that is distributed on 15th June to the devotees who come to attend the pratishtha divas or inauguration day.

Preparations of the malpuas start from 12th June and sometimes keep on going through to night of 15th June. Since, they are deep fried, they do not get off that easily as long as the moisture is not present in them. Devotees take them back to their homes to pass on the blessings prasāda to those who could not attend the festival in person. To remove the moisture from the malpuas, they are air-dried. So, the task I was assigned was to get the deep fried malpuas from the basket and take them to the place where they are air-dried. Once the malpuas have dried then to add them to the existing pile of malpuas where they are ready for packaging and distribution.

I was introduced to two other boys similar to my age that were also helping in doing the same service. They were veterans at doing this service and had been

coming to Kainchi temple and ashram for last few years. As I was both new to the service and Kainchi temple and ashram, I decided to stick with them and learn how and what is to be done. In the malpua kitchen (where I was supposed to work), different people used to come and render their services at their allocated times of the day and night. We were allocated to work from 10 pm in night to 4 am in the morning.

It was hard, mostly because the work was repetitive in nature and I was not used to being up the whole night; keeping awake between 2 am and 4 am in the morning was really challenging. One advantage of working till early mornings was that we would get darshan or audience of Maa-Maharaj-ji first thing in the morning. Siddhi Maa along with Jivanti Maa would come for Their early rounds of the ashram around 4 am. Both the Maas would go around the whole of ashram multiple times a day to encourage the workers and see the progress and the preparations for the festival.

Since, we were working in the night shifts, we used to sleep till late in the mornings. I was told that not many were willing to work for the whole night so we need to rest the whole day and be prepared and fresh for our night work in the malpua kitchen.

One day, one of my two colleagues and by now we were good friends, suggested that we all go and visit Nainital. I had never been to Nainital. I thought there seems no harm in going since we were only required to work during the night shift and for the rest of day we were mostly free. So the next day we left for Nainital after lunch. We took a KMOU (Kumaon Motor Owners Union Limited) bus service from outside Kainchi ashram that was coming from Ranikhet or Almora and going to Nainital.

After spending an adventurous time at Nainital, we arrived back at Kainchi Ashram in evening. We went inside the temple complex and saw Siddhi Maa standing in Maharaj-ji's temple. She called my two friends and said that they should have known better.

Firstly, we didn't tell anybody that we were going outside the Kainchi temple and ashram complex. Secondly, if we had that much time and energy to go sight-seeing at a place that is approx 20 km or 12 miles away for most of the day, then we should have been helping in providing other services in the ashram – since the reason we all had come to Kainchi was to render our service to Maharaj-ji for the 15th June festival.

So, all three of us were handed buckets and mops to clean Maharaj-ji's temple as our next task. Later, I came to know that as soon as we had left the ashram and temple to go to Nainital, Maa-Maharaj-ji had asked someone about where we were and what service we were performing.

From my perspective, Maa was like a protective, caring and loving mother who was concerned about her teenage boys, hence She enquired about our whereabouts. Also, She was trying to teach us to be responsible adults. When we are at Kainchi ashram, our focus and priority is to serve Maharaj-ji in as many ways as possible, especially during the festival days.



I remember another incident that happened in front of me during one of the June festival times. One of the devotees instead of doing service assigned to him came to attend and participate in singing of Sunderkand^[61]. Sunderkand is usually sung in front of Maharaj-ji in His temple during the afternoons. Around the same time, Maa-Maharaj-ji asked one of the old mothers whereabouts of this particular devotee.

The old mother reported back to Maa-Maharaj-ji and informed that the devotee is participating in singing of Sunderkand paath. Maa-Maharaj-ji asked the old mother to go back and ask the devotee to perform his allocated service first. Once he has finished his allocated service, he can come back to attend and participate in the Sunderkand paath.



From what I have seen and understood, Maa-Maharaj-ji emphasised on performing any service done at temples and ashrams as service to Maharaj-ji, irrespective to whether the service was performing prayers, participating and, or singing of Hanuman Chalisa, Sunderkand or bhajans (singing devotional songs); tending garden; cooking or helping in cooking of food or prasāda; or even sitting and participating in yagna (fire-sacrifice), etc. Puja, bhajans, human service and others, all have their own importance and place in the service towards Maharaj-ji.

Also, it does not matter whether that service was volunteered by the devotee or has been allocated but if one has accepted it, then it becomes utmost priority of the devotee that the service be done with full dedication, seriousness and tended to it as the first and foremost duty and given due importance.

I would end with a quote on service from Mahatma Gandhi:

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

- Mahatma Gandhi



Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

13. CONTENTMENT



Once Maa-Maharaj-ji addressed to my mother and said 'You have everything – what else do you need? Maharaj-ji has given you everything. One should be content with what is given. See, I have only two sarees

(Indian dress) what else do I need'. (I am not going to give out the context as embarrassing anyone is not my aim.)

Most of us are running after materialistic pleasures whether it is a better car, phone, adrenal rush, etc. and a few are running after spiritual happiness such as being in presence of Saintly Beings, being in bliss, etc. In order to get the materialistic pleasures, most need more money. Some work hard in their current jobs, some look at better means of earning. It is said that

*More money does not hurt ;
More the merrier !*

but the question that would come next is, who would define more; and more than what; and how much is enough? In the pursuit for more materialistic pleasures and money, sometimes one may forget what one was actually pursuing the materialistic pleasures or earning more money for. Moreover, an uncontrolled desire to get more may sweep us away from morality and human values; and one may start using immoral and unethical means for fulfilling those desires.



Even as early as 5th to 1st centuries BCE^[62] *Katha Upanishad* recognises that no amount of wealth would provide lasting satisfaction :

na vittena tarpaṇīyo manuṣyo

*Man is not to be satisfied with wealth,
(as no amount of wealth has completely satisfied anyone^[63])*

- Katha Upanishad || 1.1.27 ||

There is a couplet by Kabir, the weaver saint of India:

*gou dhan, gaj dhan, baji dhan, aur ratan dhan khani
jo avya santosha dhan, sab dhan dhuri samani*

*Cattle wealth, elephant wealth, horse wealth, and mine of jewels and
precious stones
once one gets contentment wealth, rest wealth is like dirt*

- Saint Kabir Das

Or simply put, all the riches of owning stocks of cattle, horses or elephants

and even owning mine of jewels and precious stones is nothing or like dirt when compared to someone who has contentment. So what is contentment ? From my perspective, contentment is to be satisfied from heart, mind, body and soul with what one has and be happy and express gratitude for it.

Contentment does not mean do not work – do not desire. Desire is necessary. To get things done, to achieve anything in life; even getting to know God or be with God is a desire. Desire is like that fire which when in control, can do good, but when out-of-control like a jungle fire can destroy everything in it's way. One can do cooking, get warmth when feeling cold from controlled fire but an uncontrolled fire can burn forests and everything else in it's path (homes, people, etc.).

When desire is uncontrolled, it takes away our intellect, our ability to differentiate between what is a wrong or immoral or bad karma and what is a right or moral or good karma. So what is immoral, unethical or bad karma? From my perspective anything that is against human values, like hurting someone by thoughts, words, intentions or actions; saying untruth or half truths out of fear or to please someone or personal gains; stealing by thoughts and actions or jealous or envious of someone or something, etc. is immoral, unethical or bad karma.



In Hindu philosophy, one of the simplest explanation of karma I have heard, is analogy of a bank account. When someone does good karma, they get credits in their karma account and in return gets materialistic or worldly and spiritual happiness. When someone does bad karma, they deplete the credits in the karma account and the person struggles in getting worldly and spiritual happiness. If someone has lots of good karma in the karma bank from previous lifetimes or has done lots of good karma in this life, then it may take longer to deplete the karma account. Simply put, good karma credits ones account and bad karma debits the account.

Usually, people think that if they have done a bad karma or some wrong actions (by thoughts, words, intentions or deeds) and doing such actions did not adversely effect their materialistic (and sometimes spiritual) happiness then it may be God's will. But what most people do not realise that not every karma has an instant reaction or results; a few may give result instantly (whether good or bad), some may give results in a few years and some in a few lifetimes.

It is like a school exams - a few exams are marked and graded at the same

time and we get the results instantly while results of most exams come after a few days or sometimes even months. In any case, no instant results does not mean that we have passed the exams.

Each bad (or good) karma done even once may have repercussions. Although sometimes, when a person gets the repercussion of bad (or good) karma, he or she may not be able to relate it back to one's past karmas.

Hence, Hindu scriptures recommend listening to one's inner conscience and be mindful in every situation. Each one of us has a inner conscience that guides us about what is right action and what is wrong action. Usually, people do not listen to their inner conscience. They either ignore it or justify it and continue with their wrong or misguided actions. To listen to one's inner conscience, one would need to take a pause, be calm, open to listening, let go of one's ego and release any pre-existing notions.



Donations (of money, labour, etc.), building temples & churches, prostrating and getting blessings from sadhus, saints, etc; doing fasting and special prayers are some of the ways people employ to maintain their good karma. But the activities done under uncontrolled desires burn the account of good karma faster than some of the methods mentioned above. In Rāmāyana, the epic story of Lord Rama shows this through the example of Ravana.

Rāmāyana is a life story of Lord Rama; how He grew up; what were His ideals and beliefs; how when Ravana abducted His wife Sita, He fought to get Her back. Ravana had knowledge of all scriptures and was so powerful that he could summon any of the gods from heaven at his will. He did rituals, prayers and fire sacrifices everyday to please Lord Shiva in order to get boons and blessings in order to continue enjoying pleasures and gain power. But his uncontrolled desire to become more powerful and make Ram's wife Sita as his own wife led to end of his empire and life.



Gautama Buddha has said that with pleasure comes suffering. They are like two sides of the same coin; if one spends time in pleasure, suffering in one form or other such as dissatisfaction, discontentment, displeasure, etc. are most likely to come sooner or later. Let's say, if one gets an expensive car, or a phone, the pleasure lasts only till a new and or a better model comes in market or someone

else has a better model. Then the desire to own the new model arises and one runs after fulfilling it. So instead of running from one desire to another, it is recommended to learn to be content in what one has or one is already blessed with.

In Manu Smiriti^[64] it is written:

*santoṣaṃ paramāsthāya sukhārthī saṃyato bhavet
santoṣamūlaṃ hi sukhaṃ duḥkhamūlaṃ viparyayaḥ*

He who wants happiness should adopt perfect contentment and remain self-controlled.

Happiness has its root in contentment, and its opposite is the root of unhappiness.

- Manu Smiriti || 4.12 ||



In role of a Guru, Maa-Maharaj-ji guides all of us to be on the path that mitigate sufferings. Of course, from our side we need to be open and ready to listen, otherwise suffering is inevitable sooner or later.

I would end with a quote from Lao Tzu, the great philosopher of ancient China:

*“Be content with what you have;
rejoice in the way things are.
When you realize there is nothing lacking,
the whole world belongs to you.”*

- Lao Tzu

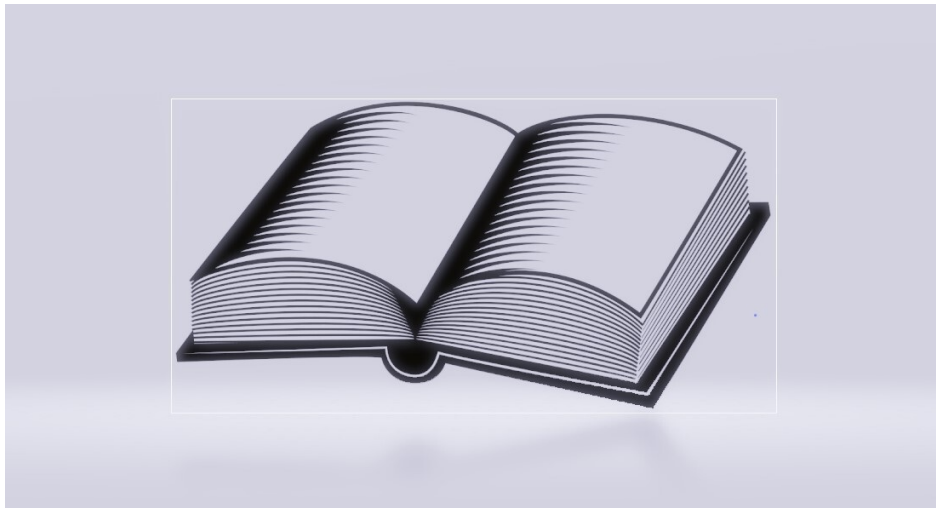


Ram

Om Shri Ganeshaya Namah

Ram

14. DO PAATH AND TELL MAHARAJ-JI



When people use to go to Maharaj-ji or Maa with their problems and issues, They generally asked the person to recite Sunderkand from Rāmāyana, Hanuman Chalisa or Bajarag Baan. According to Mahatama Gandhi, the father of Indian nation, Lord Hanuman is full of willpower and physical strength. When we do prayers to Lord Hanuman, we look up to Him for His bodily strength and will-power. He provides ability to complete any work with devotion, commitment and service as if we are providing service to God.

Hanuman Chalisa is a collection of forty verses praising Lord Hanuman that gives strength, intelligence, knowledge and removes all mental and physical ailments and impurities. It was written by Saint Tulsidas when he was

imprisoned by King Akbar^[65] for not performing a miracle when asked for and not agreeing to be part of his court ^[66].

Bajrang Baan, the arrow of Lord Hanuman or arrow that provides shield of Lord Hanuman was written by Saint Tulsidas as well. Bajrang Baan is said to remove one's obstacles and make the path free of troubles.

Sunderkand is the fifth chapter of Rāmāyana, the epic story of Lord Rama. It was originally written by sage Valmiki in Sanskrit language. Most popular version is by Saint Tulsidas who translated Valmiki's Rāmāyana from Sanskrit language to one of the languages of common people, Awadhi^[67]. Sunderkand gives combine blessings of Lord Hanuman and Lord Rama for overall improvement of one's life.

Siddhi Maa also used to say that in addition to reciting Hanuman Chalisa, Bajarag Baan or Sunderkand, tell your problems, challenges and issues to Maharaj-ji and ask for His help as well. I asked Her once, that Maharaj-ji knows everything, then why do I have to go and specifically tell Him. Maa said that Maharaj-ji does know what you want but '*you still have to tell Maharaj-ji*'. I have noticed that most of the times problems and issues do get solve this way. Why I say most and not all, I will tell at the end of this chapter.



Some people believe that when they face a complex problem then it needs to have a complex solution especially one that involves some complicated and / or multiple rituals. To them, Maa-Maharaj-ji's solution of doing paath and telling Maharaj-ji takes time or is too simple for their problem and needs to be supplemented by some other solution or solutions. Most of them do not even investigate what the problem is or the reason behind it and instead blame either the situation, their luck or on to another person. I will explain with an example.

In India and most Asian countries, there is an expectation that once a couple gets married, they would have children within early years of their marriage. If not, then there is a problem. So, when we did not have a child in the early years of our marriage, people in Kainchi and other places started giving all kinds of advice.

Some suggested that we go to a particular sadhu, pir (Muslim saint), or a baba and some even suggested that we take help of occult science^[68]. They came armed with credentials that a particular neighbour did not have a child; after they

were given something to eat, or placed something on forehead, or even with the look of a baba, pir or sadhu, these couples had a child. None asked us whether we want children in early years of our marriage and people assumed that there is a problem and help is required.

Helping people out, giving them advice is the right thing to do as well. People help others with good intentions. But as one French philosopher has said, '*Road to Hell is paved with Good Intentions*'. Just having good intentions is not enough as is illustrated with the following story from Mahābhārata of Bhishma Pitamaha^[69]

Bhishma Pitamaha was defeated in the battle of Mahābhārata by his grandson Arjuna^[70]. Arjuna hit him with so many arrows that it looked like Bhishma Pitamaha was lying on a bed of arrows.



Krishna and Pandavas along with Narada converse with Bhishma Pitamaha who is on bed of Arrows.

Bhishma Pitamaha had a boon that he could choose the time and date of his death. Since, he had also given word to his father that he will ensure that there is a suitable heir of the throne before he dies, he hung around in that painful state. Bhishma Pitamaha remained on the bed of arrows till end of Mahābhārata war and a new suitable heir was chosen.

At the end of day, knowing that Lord Krishna was incarnation of Lord

Vishnu^[71], Bhishma Pitamaha enquired about his ordeal and pain. He said, 'Lord, I can see my last 100 lifetimes. In none of them, I can see that I have done such a karma that I have to go through so much pain' (of lying on bed of arrows). Lord Krishna replied, 'Yes, you are right that you have done no such karma in your past 100 births that you have to go through such pain'.

He further added 'You know that I can see all your previous births not just last 100. In your 101 birth, you were going on a chariot and saw that a snake was lying in the middle of road. You, with good intentions and out of care that no harm would come to that snake, picked it up and placed it next to the bushes on side of the road. You did not investigate that the place you are putting the snake on is full of thorns. The snake bled to it's death after it's skin was pierced by the thorns that you unknowingly placed it on. And that's why you have to go through this pain that your skin is pierced by the arrows of Arjun. Everyone has to pay for their own karmas sooner or later'.

So, before we decide to offer our help to someone, we need to spend some time in investigating what the problem is or whether there is a problem or not. As I have mentioned before, there is a saying in India that '*Kabhi dekha huā aur suna huā, saab sach yeah pura sach nahi hota hai*' or not everything that one sees or hears is truth or full truth. I have seen people usually rely on sob-stories of others, here-say, gossip or someone else they might trust to determine what and whether there is a problem, instead of investigating themselves and using their own wisdom.

And this is not just limited to giving advice but also applies to other facets of life as well, such as when we are forming opinions about someone based on here-say, gossip or other people opinions, etc. If one thinks one is not bounded by bad karma if misinformation is passed onto them, then they would be mistaken - each one is responsible for their own karma.

Gautama Buddha and Lord Krishna, both have said that karma is not just actions done by physical means but also include our intentions, thoughts, speech, words, etc. as all of these are actions of one kind or another. Each karma, whether by intention, thought, speech, words may bear different degree of repercussions and not all karmas may give results at the same time.

There is also a general trend these days that people use occult science to solve their problems and issues. People who go there are generally driven by their ego, desire, and selfish interests. They do not consider the long term impact on them and their future generations, lineage, etc. Once I asked, 'mother, if you have a

problem, why don't you tell Maa-Maharaj-ji, She would help solve the problem'. The answer I got was, 'Maa does not do such work'. And yes, of course Maa and Maharaj-ji do not do such work and there is a good reason behind it.

When someone uses occult science to solve their problems and issues, it binds additional karmas that gives suffering in long term for everyone involved; the person on whose behalf the occult science is done, the person who is doing it, the person to whom it is done to and any person who acts as intermediary.

One must remember that nothing in this world happens without a reason. All problems, troubles and issues that one has to face are there to teach and help us move forward in life. Once we learn what we are suppose to learn from the situation, the problem goes away or we get the strength to handle it calmly and positively. Unfortunately, our first reaction is to blame and throw the problem on someone else or try to escape from it. This may result in additional problems manifesting in our life in different ways or forms as well as unwanted karmic burdens.

Maa-Maharaj-ji knows one's past, present, and future, the root of our problems and give solutions accordingly. So sometimes, even when we tell Maharaj-ji our problems and issues, He may not solve it as expected - He knows what is best for us in the long run; what will cleanse our future and not make it more contaminated. That's why I said earlier, that most and not all of the times, our problems, challenges and issues in life, do get solved by telling to Maharaj-ji.





C. THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



15. JOURNEY CONTINUES



When I was a kid, I once visited a circus. In India, during those days, we used to have live animal shows in a circus (although they are banned nowadays). I saw an huge elephant tied with a rope by it's leg. The rope did not seem to be so strong that the elephant could not free itself. So I enquired, doesn't this elephant know that it can free itself of this flimsy rope and run away. I was told that when the elephant was a baby, it was tied with iron chains. It would have tried to run away and in doing so, it would have hurt itself. Over the years, it is conditioned to believe that whenever it is tied, it is tied to the iron-

chains. So, even though it is tied to this flimsy rope, it still thinks there are iron chains binding it.

The training and teachings that one is given as a young child act either as fodder that blooms a young mind into a beautiful flower or as chains that bind it's subconscious hindering it's growth. When I ran away as a kid, I was hurt by the iron chains binding me and have hurt me ever since.

There were multiple times when Maa-Maharaj-ji told me to do specific things but I followed what my mother was saying as the iron chains wrapped around my subconscious were stronger. Till now, most of my karmas were based on what my mother was asking me to do rather than what Maa-Maharaj-ji was asking me to do. Now that I realise that it is chain that can be broken, I am revisiting my Satguru Maa-Maharaj-ji's life and sayings and what They have been trying to teach.

I have come to the realisation that control of subconscious gets broken sooner or later and hurts everyone involved while binds of unconditional selfless love always prevails. As someone said, Maa-Maharaj-ji is *love incarnate*, Their love or love of Lord is the only unconditional and selfless love in this world. Now, I understood -why most of the prayers and verses in Hindu scriptures say that Guru and Lord are '*mata, pita, bhai, bandhu*' or 'mother, father, brother, friend' as only true selfless relative that exist is Lord or a true Guru; others may or may not fulfil there duties unconditionally and give one selfless love



The task to change one's subconscious is not easy, especially changing training and teachings that one got as a young child or belief-systems one has learnt over the years while growing up.

If one has a house that needs rebuilding then there are two options, either to *flip the house*^[72] and save what can be retained or if the house cannot be flipped easily then to bull-doze it and start from scratch. But if one needs to rebuild a life, then the house or body and mind would need to be rebuild without demolishing it.

It is a slow and painful work to save what can be saved and remove that has been harmful. For example, Ram Dass would have realised that a simple six words teaching from Maharaj-ji to *Love Everyone and Speak the Truth* is not an easy task. It takes a lot of courage, effort, patience and practice to imbibe the

essence of those words into one's life.

Siddhi Maa used to say, '*Jab Jago Tab Savera*'- when you wake-up it is morning then or when awareness comes, new beginning starts from there. So hopefully, this would be my new beginning by the Grace of my Guru.



Lord Krishna said '*Atyachar sehna aur karna, dono galat hai*' or 'To abuse someone or to put up with the abuse, both are wrong'. Guru gives strength and courage to stand up and speak against abuse, injustice, betrayal, etc, and provides His Light and Grace to heal the body, mind and soul. Sometime, this process takes a few years while in some cases it may take a few lifetimes. But in the end, with Guru's grace and strength, one learns to accept, fix and stand up for Truth and Dharma by doing the right action and duty aligned with humanity.

It is by my Guru's strength that I can go back and revisit some of the painful past events that I had locked up. I may not be able to fix everything in the past, but I have started with acknowledging those who have made positive effect in my life. It is only my Guru's grace that I had the insights while revisiting the events of my life, some of which I have mentioned in this book. As I have mentioned earlier - thoughts are His, words are His, Grace is His.

Also, I have tried to exemplify that what seems to be mundane or everyday sayings of Maa-Maharaj-ji have a deeper meaning to them. When I met Siddhi Maa for the first time at Jaunapur temple and ashram, She said that '*I don't speak*' - I thought that She was just referring to my situation where I had stopped talking to people - but now I understand the deeper, more profound meaning of what She said. Revisiting your Guru's teachings from time-to-time throws Light on yourself, your family and maybe some of those shadowy parts of your life that you have not been looking at and perhaps gives you strength and courage to be a better version of who you already are.

One of the ways we can realise the deeper meaning of Maa-Maharaji-ji or Guru's teachings and sayings is to use the three-step process. The first step is *Shravana* that is to listen; the second is *Manana* or understanding and reflecting on what is said; and the last *Nididhyasana* that is meditating deeply on what's understood and then incorporating in one's life.



If I look at where I was in my previous lives and where I am now, I can say that it is sheer Maa-Maharaj-ji's pure Grace that I have reached this stage. Over the years I have come to realise that it is not just me but all who have somehow come in contact with Maa-Maharaj have received Their grace whether one knows about it or not. The grace is generally based on what someone needs and probably may not be based on what someone thinks they want.

I would end with the following verse about a true Satguru:

-

*brahmānandam paramasukhadam kevalam jñānamūrtim
dvandvātītam gaganasadṛśham tattvamasyādilakshyam
ekam nityam vimalamachalam sarvadhīsākshibhūtam
bhāvātītam trigunarahitam sadgurum tam namāmi*

*To That bliss of Brahman, giver of the greatest joy, personification of
knowledge
One Who is beyond duality, vast and existing everywhere as universe, and
object of 'Thou Are That'
The One, The Eternal, The Pure and Steady, and Witness of All
One Who is beyond existence, without the three gunas (sattva, rajas, and
tanmas), I bow to That Satguru*

- Guru Gita (Skanda Purana)



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https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Germany,_Brunswick,_16th_century_-_Two-Handed_Sword_of_the_State_Guard_of_Julius_of_Brunswick-Lun%C3%BCneburg_-_1916.1508_-_Cleveland_Museum_of_Art.tif&oldid=452617918 , licensed under CC Public Domain Mark 1.0, 2022

Image: Cosmos: Chapter - Guru Knows Everything

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), "Composite Image of NGC 3344" X-ray: NASA/CXC/Washington State Univ./V. Baldassare et al.; Optical: NASA/ESA/STScI, Edited by Mohan Lee, https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/chandra/images/composite-image-of-ngc-3344.html, licensed under CC Public Domain Mark 1.0, April 2022

Image: Sheetla Devi: Chapter - Guru Knows Everything

- Cleveland Museum of Art, "Sheetaladevi: The Smallpox Goddess (recto); Durga (verso)", year = c. 1890

<https://clevelandart.org/art/2003.157> , licensed under CC0, 2022

Image: Lotus: Chapter - Spiritualise Life

- Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:Nelumbo nucifera1.jpg," Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Nelumbo_nucifera1.jpg&oldid=452967934 , licensed under CC0, 2022

Image: Magnolia flowers: Chapter - Service

- Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:20150412Magnolia x soulangeana2.jpg" Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:20150412Magnolia_x_soulangeana2.jpg&oldid=48725354 , licensed under CC0, 2022

Image: Yin-Yang: Chapter - Contentment

- Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:KALA-YinYan.jpg," Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:KALA-YinYan.jpg&oldid=454643728> , licensed under CC0, 2022

Image: Krishna and Pandavas along with Narada converse with Bhishma who is on bed of Arrows: Chapter - Do Paath and Tell Maharaj-ji

- Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:Krishna and Pandavas along with Narada converse with Bhishma who is on bed of Arrows.jpg," Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Krishna_and_Pandavas_along_with_Narada_converse_witl , licensed under CC Public Domain Mark 1.0, 2022

Image: Path: Chapter - The Journey Continues

- Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File:Sunlit path in the forest maritime forest habitat.jpg" Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Sunlit_path_in_the_forest_maritime_forest_habitat.jpg&oldid=452967934 , licensed under CC Public Domain Mark 1.0, 2022



17. REFERENCES

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- [1] Rishikesh, is a city and a tehsil in Dehradun district of the Indian state Uttarakhand. Located in the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India, it is known as the "Gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas" and "Yoga Capital of the World". It is known as the pilgrimage town and regarded as one of the holiest places for Hindus. Hindu sages and saints have visited Rishikesh since ancient times to meditate in search of higher knowledge. It lies 21 km (13 miles) north of the city of Haridwar and 45 km (28 miles) south-east of the state capital Dehradun. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Rishikesh', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rishikesh> , 2022
- [2] Gautama Buddha (also Siddhārtha Gautama, Shakyamuni, Buddha) was the founder of Buddhism and is revered by Buddhists as a fully enlightened being who taught a path to Nirvana (lit. vanishing or extinguishing), freedom from ignorance, craving, rebirth and suffering. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Gautama Buddha', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha , 2022
- [3] Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Torah (in Judaism), where it is called Devarim (lit. 'the words [of Moses]') and the fifth book of the Christian Old Testament. Chapters 1–30 of the book consist of three sermons or speeches delivered to the Israelites by Moses on the Plains of Moab, shortly before they enter the Promised Land. The first sermon recounts the forty years of wilderness wanderings which had led to that moment, and ends with an exhortation to observe the law. The second sermon reminds the Israelites of the need to follow Yahweh and the laws (or teachings) he has given them, on which their possession of the land depends. The third sermon offers the comfort that, even should the nation of Israel prove unfaithful and so lose the land, with repentance all can be restored. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Book of

Deuteronomy', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Deuteronomy , 2022

[4] Ashram denotes a place removed from urban life, where spiritual practices are pursued. The place may consist of a few cottages or large buildings where the people can come and stay and do spiritual practices in solitude.

[5] Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa or Bhāgavatam) is written by saint Veda Vyasa around sixth century CE. It is especially revered by Hindus who believe Lord Vishnu to be main God. Bhāgavatam discusses a wide range of topics including cosmology, astronomy, genealogy, geography, legend, music, dance, yoga and culture. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Bhagavata Purana', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavata_Purana, 2022

[6] The Mahābhārata is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other being the Rāmāyaṇa. It narrates the struggle between two groups of cousins in the Kurukshetra War and the fates of the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava princes and their successors. It also contains philosophical and devotional material, such as a discussion of the four "goals of life" or puruṣārtha. Among the principal works and stories in the Mahābhārata are the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita, the story of Damayanti, the story of Shakuntala, the story of Pururava and Urvashi, the story of Savitri and Satyavan, the story of Kacha and Devayani, the story of Rishyasringa and an abbreviated version of the Rāmāyaṇa, often considered as works in their own right. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Mahabharata', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahabharata> , 2022

[7] The Rāmāyana is a Sanskrit epic from ancient India and one of the largest ancient epics in world literature. It consists of nearly 24,000 verses (mostly set in the Shloka/Anustubh meter), divided into seven kāṇḍas or chapters. It belongs to the genre of Itihasa, narratives of past events (purāvṛtta), interspersed with teachings on the goals of human life. Scholars' estimates for the earliest stage of the text range from the 7th to 4th centuries BCE, with later stages extending up to the 3rd century CE. Rāmāyana is one of the two important legends of Hinduism, known as the Itihasas, the other being the Mahābhārata. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Ramayana', *Wikipedia, The Free*

Encyclopedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana>, 2022

- [8] Veda, (Sanskrit: “Knowledge”) a collection of poems or hymns composed in archaic Sanskrit by Indo-European-speaking peoples who lived in northwest India during the 2nd millennium BCE. No definite date can be ascribed to the composition of the Vedas, but the period of about 1500–1200 BCE is acceptable to most scholars. - Doniger, W., 'Veda', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Veda>. May 16, 2022
- [9] Upanishad, also spelled Upanisad, Sanskrit Upaniṣad (“Connection”), one of four genres of texts that together constitute each of the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of most Hindu traditions. Each of the four Vedas—the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda—consists of a Samhita (a “collection” of hymns or sacred formulas); a liturgical prose exposition called a Brahmana; and two appendices to the Brahmana—an Aranyaka (“Book of the Wilderness”), which contains esoteric doctrines meant to be studied by the initiated in the forest or some other remote place, and an Upanishad, which speculates about the ontological connection between humanity and the cosmos. Because the Upanishads constitute the concluding portions of the Vedas, they are called vedanta (“the conclusion of the Vedas”), and they serve as the foundational texts in the theological discourses of many Hindu traditions that are also known as Vedanta. The Upanishads’ impact on later theological and religious expression and the abiding interest they have attracted are greater than that of any of the other Vedic texts. - Olivelle, P., 'Upanishad' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Upanishad> , July 11 2017.
- [10] The Śrīmad Bhagavad Gita or 'The Song by God' often referred to as the Gita, is a 700-verse Hindu scripture that is part of the epic Mahābhārata (chapters 23–40 of book 6 of the Mahābhārata called the Bhishma Parva). The Bhagavad Gita is the most famous of Hindu holy texts, and has a unique pan-Hindu influence. It presents a synthesis of Hindu ideas about dharma, theistic bhakti, and the yogic ideals of moksha. The text covers Jñāna, Bhakti, Karma, and Rāja yogas (spoken of in the 6th chapter), incorporating ideas from the Samkhya-Yoga philosophy. The Gita's call for selfless action inspired many leaders of the Indian independence movement including Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi, the latter referring to it as his "spiritual dictionary". -

Wikipedia contributors, 'Bhagavad Gita', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavad_Gita, 2022

[11] A Yuga is part of Yuga Cycle, a cyclic age (epoch) in Hindu cosmology. Each cycle lasts for 4,320,000 years (12,000 divine years) and repeats four yugas (world ages): Krita (Satya) Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga (believed to be the current yuga or cycle). As a Yuga Cycle progresses through the four yugas, each yuga's length and humanity's general moral and physical state within each yuga decrease by one-fourth. Kali Yuga, which lasts for 432,000 years, is believed to have started in 3102 BCE. Near the end of Kali Yuga, when virtues are at their worst, a cataclysm and a re-establishment of dharma occur to usher in the next cycle's Satya Yuga. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Yuga Cycle', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuga_Cycle, 2022

[12] Kalki, also called Kalkin or Karki, is the prophesied tenth and final incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu. He is described to appear in order to end the Kali Yuga, one of the four periods in the endless cycle of existence (Krita) in Vaishnavism cosmology. The end of the Kali Yuga states this will usher in the new epoch of Satya Yuga in the cycle of existence, until the Mahapralaya (dissolution of the universe). Kalki is also found in Buddhist texts, for example the Kalachakra-Tantra of Tibetan Buddhism. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Kalki', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalki>, 2022

[13] Tulsidas, also known as Goswami Tulsidas, was a Ramanandi Vaishnava Hindu saint and poet, renowned for his devotion to the deity Rama. He wrote several popular works in Sanskrit and Awadhi, but is best known as the author of the Hanuman Chalisa and of the epic Ramcharitmanas, a retelling of the Sanskrit Rāmāyana based on Rama's life in the vernacular Awadhi. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Tulsidas', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsidas>, 2022

[14] Kabir Das (1398–1518) was a 15th-century Indian mystic poet and saint, whose writings influenced Hinduism's Bhakti movement and his verses are found in Sikhism's scripture Guru Granth Sahib, Satguru Granth Sahib of

Saint Garib Das and Kabir Sagar. Kabir's poems were in vernacular Hindi, borrowing from various dialects including Braj, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. They cover various aspects of life and call for a loving devotion for God. Kabir composed his verses with simple Hindi words. Most of his work was concerned with devotion, mysticism and discipline. Born in the city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, he is known for being critical of both organized religion and religions. He questioned meaningless and unethical practices of all religions primarily the wrong practices in Hindu and Muslim religion. During his lifetime, he was threatened by both Hindus and Muslims for his views. When he died, both Hindus and Muslims he had inspired claimed him as theirs. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Kabir', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabir> , 2022

[15] Vrindavan also spelt Vrindaban and Brindaban, is a historical city in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It is located in the Braj Bhoomi region, and holds religious importance in Hinduism as god Krishna spent most of his childhood days in this city. Vrindavan has about 5500 temples dedicated to the worship of Krishna and his divine consort Radha. It is one of the most sacred places for Vaishnavism tradition. Vrindavan is a significant part of the "Krishna pilgrimage circuit". - Wikipedia contributors, 'Vrindavan', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vrindavan> , 2022

[16] Sheshanaga or Adishesha (Ādiśeṣa), is a serpentine demigod (Naga) and Nagaraja (King of all serpents), as well as a primordial being of creation in Hinduism. In the Puranas, Shesha is said to hold all the planets of the universe on his hoods and to constantly sing the glories of Vishnu from all his mouths. He is sometimes referred to as Ananta Shesha, "Endless-Shesha". Adishesha is generally depicted with a massive form that floats coiled through space, or upon the Ocean of Milk, to form the bed upon which Vishnu lays. It is said that when Adishesha uncoils, time moves forward and creation takes place; when he coils back, the universe ceases to exist. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Shesha', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shesha> , 2022

[17] Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, shrines which are said to be the most sacred abodes of Shiva. The shrine is also revered as one of the 51 Shakti Peetham, a pilgrimage destinations in Shaktism, or the

goddess-centric denomination in Hinduism. It is located in the ancient city of Ujjain in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India at banks of the holy river Shipra. The presiding deity, Shiva in the lingam form is believed to be Swayambhu, deriving currents of power (Shakti) from within itself as against the other images and lingams that are ritually established and invested with mantra-shakti. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahakaleshwar_Jyotirlinga , 2022

[18] Ram Dass was one of the prominent devotees of Neem Karoli Baba who spread His message of Ram and Love in the west. Neem Karoli Baba gave Richard Alpert the name of "Ram Dass", which means "servant of God or servant of Lord Ram". Ram Dass, was an American spiritual teacher, guru of modern yoga, psychologist, and author. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Ram Dass', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram_Dass , 2022

[19] Avadhūta is a Sanskrit term from the root 'to shake' that indicates a type of mystic or saint in Hinduism who is beyond egoic-consciousness, duality and common worldly concerns and acts without consideration for standard social etiquette. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Bhagavata Purana', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avadhuta> , 2022

[20] Information about Siddhi sourced from - Wikipedia contributors, 'Siddhi', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhi> , 2022

[21] Goloka or Goloka Vrindavan is the eternal supreme abode of the Hindu god Krishna and his divine consort Radha. In the Bhagavata Purana, Krishna is portrayed as the highest person who resides in Goloka. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Goloka', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goloka> , 2022

[22] Information about Sikhism sourced from - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sikhism', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism> , 2022

[23] Verse from Devīsūktam (Caṇḍīpāṭha). The Devīsūktam, also popularly

called as the Caṇḍīpāṭha is a hymnal text that occurs in the 5th chapter of the Devīmāhātmyam, also known as Durgāsaptasatī. The Devīsūktam eulogises the manifold manifestations of the fierce goddess (Devī), Caṇḍī or Durgā, in her objective and subjective aspects. This hymn is very popular and is chanted every day in the Devī temples across India. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Devīsūktam (Chandipatha)', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dev%C4%ABs%C5%ABktam_\(Chandipatha\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dev%C4%ABs%C5%ABktam_(Chandipatha)) , 2022

[24] Mahatma Gandhi or Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2 October 1869 and died on 30 January 1948. He was an Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist and political ethicist who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British rule, and to later inspire movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. The honorific Mahātmā (Sanskrit: "great-souled", "venerable"), first applied to him in 1914 in South Africa, is now used throughout the world. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Mahata Gandhi', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi, 2022

[25] The Kashmiri Pandits (also known as Kashmiri Brahmins) are a group of Kashmiri Hindus and a part of the larger Saraswat Brahmin community of India. They are from the Kashmir Valley, a mountainous region located within the Indian-administered union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Kashmiri Pandit', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmiri_Pandits, 2022

[26] Karma is a concept of Hinduism which describes a system in which beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial actions and harmful effects from past harmful actions, creating a system of actions and reactions throughout a soul's (jivatman's) reincarnated lives forming a cycle of rebirth. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Karma in Hinduism', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karma_in_Hinduism , 2022

[27] In India, during the time I was in school, each grade (say grade 6th) within a school would have multiple classes (such as A, B, C and so on). Each class would have around 30 to 40 students in it and we would have different teachers for different subjects.

[28] Residence, abode; seat of a deity

[29] A buffet is a meal-serving system where patrons serve themselves. It's a popular method of feeding large numbers of people with minimal staff. The term originally referred to the sideboard where the food was served, but eventually became applied to the form. - D Jain, 'What is the origin of the buffet system', *Times of India*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/what-is-the-origin-of-the-buffet-system/articleshow/1234441.cms>, 17 Sept 2017

[30] Kalpavriksha, also known as kalpataru, kalpadruma or kalpapādapa, is a wish-fulfilling divine tree in Indian-origin religions, like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Kalpavriksha', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalpavriksha>, 2022

[31] Sai Baba of Shirdi (c. 1838? - died 15 October 1918), also known as Shirdi Sai Baba, was an Indian spiritual master, identified as a saint and a fakir and was revered by both his Hindu and Muslim devotees during, as well as after, his lifetime. – Wikipedia contributors, 'Sai Baba of Shirdi', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sai_Baba_of_Shirdi, 2022

[32] Shri Swami Samarth, also known as Swami of Akkalkot was an Indian spiritual master of the Dattatreya Tradition. He is a widely known spiritual figure in various Indian states including Maharashtra, India. He lived during the nineteenth century. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Swami Samarth', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swami_Samarth, 2022

[33] Ramakrishna Paramhansa was an Indian Hindu mystic and religious leader who lived in 19th-century Bengal. Ramakrishna approached his religious life through the path of devotion to the Goddess Kali, and by observance of various elements from Tantra, Vaishnav Bhakti, and Advaita Vedanta, as well as experiences with Christianity and Islam. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Ramakrishna', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramakrishna>, 2022

[34] Vedanta, also Uttara Mīmāṃsā, is one of the six (āstika) schools of Hindu

philosophy. Literally meaning "end of the Vedas", Vedanta reflects ideas that emerged from, or were aligned with, the speculations and philosophies contained in the Upanishads, specifically, knowledge and liberation. Vedanta contains many sub-traditions, all of which are based on a common group of texts called the "Three Sources" (prasthānatrayī): the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Vedanta', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedanta>, 2022

[35] Mission statement of Ramakrishna order sourced from - Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, India <https://belurmath.org/about-us/> , 2022

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[37] Ganesha also known as Ganapati, Vinayaka, and Pillaiyar, is one of the best-known and most worshipped deities in the Hindu pantheon. Although Ganesha has many attributes, he is readily identified by his elephant head. He is widely revered, more specifically, as the remover of obstacles and thought to bring good luck; the patron of arts and sciences; and the deva of intellect and wisdom. As the god of beginnings, he is honoured at the start of rites and ceremonies. Ganesha is also invoked as a patron of letters and learning during writing sessions. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Ganesha', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganesha> , 2022

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[39] Sourced from - Wikipedia contributors, 'Ecclesiastes', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastes> , 2022

[40] Ēkāntavāsa or in seclusion. People from time to time go in seclusion or ekāntavāsa - away from society to stay in a quiet place usually to contemplate, meditate, heal or find themselves. - Collins, 'seclusion', Collins Dictionaries, English to Hindi, www.collinsdictionary.com , <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-hindi/seclusion> , 2022

[41] Ayurveda is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. Therapies include herbal medicines, special diets, meditation, yoga, massage, laxatives, enemas, and medical oils. Ayurvedic preparations are typically based on complex herbal compounds, minerals, and metal substances. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Ayurveda', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayurveda> , 2022

[42] Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa or Bhāgavatam) is written by saint Veda Vyasa around sixth century CE. It is especially revered by Hindus who believe Lord Vishnu to be main God. Bhāgavatam discusses a wide range of topics including cosmology, astronomy, genealogy, geography, legend, music, dance, yoga and culture. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Bhagavata Purana', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavata_Purana, 2022

[43] Pearly gates is an informal name for the gateway to Heaven according to some Christian denominations. It is inspired by the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:21: "The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate being made from a single pearl." - Wikipedia contributors, 'Pearly gates', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pearly_gates , 2022

[44] Sourced from - Ram Dass's *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba* <https://shop.ramdass.org/products/miracle-love> , 2022

[45] Paramahansa Yogananda (born Mukunda Lal Ghosh; January 5, 1893 – March 7, 1952) was an Indian Hindu monk, yogi and guru who introduced millions to the teachings of meditation and Kriya Yoga through his organization Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) / Yogoda Satsanga Society (YSS) of India, and who lived his last 32 years in America. A chief disciple of the Bengali yoga guru Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, he was sent by his lineage to spread the teachings of yoga to the West, to prove the unity between Eastern and Western religions and to preach a balance between Western material growth and Indian spirituality. His long-standing influence in the American yoga movement, and especially the yoga culture of Los Angeles, led him to be considered by yoga experts as the "Father of Yoga in the West. He published his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, in 1946, to critical and commercial acclaim and introduces the methods of attaining God-realization and to the spiritual wisdom of the East, which had only been available to a few in 1946. The author claims that the writing of the book was prophesied long ago by the nineteenth-century master Lahiri Mahasaya (Paramguru of Yogananda). - Wikipedia contributors, 'Paramahansa Yogananda', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paramahansa_Yogananda , 2022, and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autobiography_of_a_Yogi , 2022

[46] One of the major Hindu traditions that worships Lord Shiva as the Supreme Being. Shaivite theology ranges from Lord Shiva being the creator, preserver, and destroyer to being the same as the Atman (Self) within oneself and every living being. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Shaivism', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shivaism> , 2022

[47] Larry or Lawrence Brilliant is an American epidemiologist, technologist, philanthropist, and author, who worked with the World Health Organization from 1973 - 1976 helping to successfully eradicate smallpox. Neem Karoli Baba gave him the name of “Subramanyum” which is another name for Lord Kartikeya or “God of War and Chief of army of Gods” probably due to his fight against smallpox and leadership role he has played since in various philanthropy projects - Wikipedia contributors, 'Larry Brilliant', *Wikipedia*,

The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Brilliant , 2022

[48] Swami Sivananda or Sivananda Saraswati was a Hindu spiritual teacher, and a proponent of Vedanta. Sivananda was born Kuppeaswami in 1887 Pattamadai, in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. He studied medicine and served in British Malaya as a physician for several years before taking up monasticism. He was the founder of the Divine Life Society (DLS) in 1936, Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy (1948) and author of over 200 books on yoga, Vedanta, and a variety of subjects. He established Sivananda Ashram, the headquarters of the DLS, on the bank of the Ganges at Muni Ki Reti, 3 kilometres (1.9 mi) from Rishikesh, and lived most of his life there before He left His body in 1963. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sivananda Saraswati', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sivananda_Saraswati , 2022

[49] Narada or Narada Muni, is a sage divinity, famous in Hindu traditions as a travelling musician and storyteller, who carries news and enlightening wisdom. He is one of mind-created children of Brahma, the creator god. He appears in a number of Hindu texts, notably the Mahābhārata, regaling Yudhishtira with the story of Prahalada and the Rāmāyana as well as tales in the Puranas. In Indian texts, Narada travels to distant worlds and realms (Sanskrit: lokas). He is depicted carrying a khartal (musical instrument) and the veena, and is generally regarded as one of the great masters of the ancient musical instrument which he uses to accompany his singing of hymns, prayers, and mantras. In the Vaishnavism tradition of Hinduism, he is presented as a sage with devotion to the preserver deity Vishnu. Vaishnavas depict him as a pure, elevated soul who glorifies Vishnu through his devotional songs, singing the names Hari and Narayana, and therein demonstrating bhakti yoga. The Narada Bhakti Sutra is attributed to him. He would usually make his presence known by vocally chanting "Narayana, Narayana" before appearing in a scene. Other texts named after Narada include the Narada Purana and the Nārada-smṛiti (pre 6th century CE text), the latter called the "juridical text par excellence" and representing the only Dharmaśāstra text that deals solely with juridical matters while ignoring those of righteous conduct and penance. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Narada', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narada> , 2022

[50] Brihad-bhagavatamrita is a sacred text for followers of Hindu tradition of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Along with Hari-bhakti-vilasa, it is one of the most important works of Vaishnava theologian Sanatana Goswami. While Hari-Bhakti-Vilasa sets out guidance for Vaishnava behavior and ritual, Brihad-bhagavatamrita contains an analysis of the teachings of Chaitanya from an ontological and metaphysical perspective. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Brihad Bhagavatamrita', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brihad_Bhagavatamrita , 2022

[51] Varanasi is one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities. Kashi, its ancient name, was associated with a kingdom of the same name of 2,500 years ago. In the Rigveda, an ancient Indian sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns, the city is referred to as Kāśī from the Sanskrit verbal root kaś- "to shine", making Varanasi known as "City of Light", the "luminous city as an eminent seat of learning". The name was also used by pilgrims dating from Buddha's days. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Varanasi', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varanasi> , 2022

[52] Shiva, also known as Mahadeva 'The Great God' or Hara, is one of the principal deities of Hinduism. He is the Supreme Being in Shaivism, one of the major traditions within Hinduism. Shiva has many aspects, benevolent as well as fearsome. In benevolent aspects, he is depicted as an omniscient Yogi who lives an ascetic life on Mount Kailash as well as a householder with his wife Parvati and his two children, Ganesha and Kartikeya. In his fierce aspects, he is often depicted slaying demons. Shiva is also known as Adiyogi Shiva, regarded as the patron god of yoga, meditation and the arts. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Shiva', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiva> , 2022

[53] Sadhguru is a yogi, a mystic and visionary, a man whose passion spills into everything he encounters. Named one of India's 50 most influential people, Sadhguru's work has touched the lives of millions worldwide through his transformational programs. Sadhguru has a unique ability to make the ancient yogic sciences relevant to contemporary minds, acting as a bridge to the deeper dimensions of life. His approach does not ascribe to any belief system, but offers methods for self-transformation that are both proven and powerful. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sadhguru', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadhguru> , 2022; and

<https://isha.sadhguru.org/au/en/sadhguru#meet-sadhguru>

[54] Paath or Path from the Sanskrit patha which means reading or recitation, is, in the religious context, reading or recitation of the holy texts. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Paath', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paath>, 2022

[55] Information about Sikhism sourced from - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sikhism', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism>, 2022

[56] The Bahá'í Faith is a relatively new religion teaching the essential worth of all religions and the unity of all people. According to Bahá'í teachings, religion is revealed in an orderly and progressive way by a single God through Manifestations of God, who are the founders of major world religions throughout history; Gautama Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad are noted as the most recent of these before the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís regard the world's major religions as fundamentally unified in purpose, though varied in social practices and interpretations. The Bahá'í Faith stresses the unity of all people, explicitly rejecting racism, sexism, and nationalism. At the heart of Bahá'í teachings is the goal of a unified world order that ensures the prosperity of all nations, races, creeds, and classes. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Bahá'í Faith', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%BC%C3%AD_Faith, 2022

[57] Sourced from Yogananda Paramhansa , 2022

[58] Sourced from - Ram Dass's *Miracle of Love: stories about Neem Karoli Baba* <https://shop.ramdass.org/products/miracle-love>, 2022

[59] The Rigveda or Rig Veda is an ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns (sūktas). It is one of the four sacred canonical Hindu texts (śruti) known as the Vedas. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sikhism', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigveda>, 2022

[60] Rigveda mentions a sweet cake made of barley called apūpa, where barley flour was either fried in ghee or boiled in water. Malpua preserves both the

name and the essentials of this preparation. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sweets from the Indian subcontinent', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweets_from_the_Indian_subcontinent, 2022

[61] Sunderkand or Sundara Kanda is the only chapter of the Rāmāyana in which the principal protagonist is not Rama, but rather Hanuman. The work depicts the adventures of Hanuman and his selflessness, strength, and devotion to Rama are emphasized in the text. Hanuman was fondly called “Sundara” by his mother Anjani and Sage Valmiki chose this name over others as the Sundara Kanda is about Hanuman's journey to Lanka. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Sundara Kanda', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sundara_Kanda, 2022

[62] Sourced from - Wikipedia contributors, 'Katha Upanishad', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katha_Upanishad, 2022

[63] Commented by Adi Shankaracharya (Adi Shankara (8th cent. CE) also called Adi Shankaracharya was an Indian Vedic scholar and teacher (acharya), whose works present a harmonizing reading of the sastras, with liberating knowledge of the self at its core, synthesizing the Advaita Vedanta teachings of his time.) - Wikipedia contributors, 'Adi Shankara', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adi_Shankara, 2022

[64] The Manusmṛiti also known as the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra or Laws of Manu, is one of the many legal texts and constitution among the many Dharmaśāstras of Hinduism. In ancient India, the sages often wrote their ideas on how society should run in the manuscripts. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Manusmriti', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manusmriti>, 2022

[65] King Akbar or Abu'l-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar (25 October 1542[a] – 27 October 1605), popularly known as Akbar the Great and also as Akbar was the third Mughal emperor, who reigned from 1556 to 1605. Akbar succeeded his father, Humayun, under a regent, Bairam Khan, who helped the young emperor expand and consolidate Mughal domains in India. Akbar's reign significantly influenced the course of Indian history. During his rule, the Mughal Empire tripled in size and wealth. He created a powerful military

system and instituted effective political and social reforms. By abolishing the sectarian tax on non-Muslims and appointing them to high civil and military posts, he was the first Mughal ruler to win the trust and loyalty of the native subjects. He had Sanskrit literature translated, participated in native festivals, realising that a stable empire depended on the co-operation and good-will of his subjects. Thus, the foundations for a multicultural empire under Mughal rule were laid during his reign. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Akbar', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akbar> , 2022

[66] Sourced from - Wikipedia contributors, 'Tulsidas', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulsidas> , 2022

[67] Awadhi, also known as Oudhi is an Eastern Hindi language of the Indo-Aryan branch spoken in northern India. It is primarily spoken in the Awadh region of present-day Uttar Pradesh, India. The name Awadh is connected to Ayodhya, the ancient city, which is regarded as the homeland of the Hindu god Rama. It was, along with Braj Bhasha, used widely as a literary vehicle before being displaced by Hindustani in the 19th century. Linguistically, Awadhi is a language at par with Hindustani. However, it is regarded by the state to be a dialect of the Central Indo-Aryan (Hindi) languages, and the area where Awadhi is spoken to be a part of the Hindi-language area owing to their cultural proximity. As a result, Modern Standard Hindi, rather than Awadhi, is used for school instructions as well as administrative and official purposes; and its literature falls within the scope of Hindi literature. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Awadhi language', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Awadhi_language , 2022

[68] The term occult sciences was used in 16th-century Europe to refer to astrology, alchemy, and natural magic, which today are considered pseudosciences. The occult, in the broadest sense, is a category of esoteric supernatural beliefs and practices which generally fall outside the scope of religion and science, encompassing phenomena involving otherworldly agency, such as magic, sorcery, and mysticism and their varied spells. It can also refer to supernatural ideas like extra-sensory perception and parapsychology. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Occult', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occult>, 2022

[69] Bhishma, also known as Pitamaha, Gangaputra and Devavrata, played an integral role in Mahābhārata. He was the supreme commander of the Kaurava forces during the Kurukshetra War mentioned in the Hindu epic Mahābhārata. He was the only character who witnessed the entirety of the Mahābhārata, beginning from the reign of his father, King Shantanu of the Kuru kingdom. Bhishma was the elder brother of the grandfather of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and a prominent statesman of the Kuru Kingdom. He was born as the elder son of the illustrious King Shantanu and Ganga. He was related to both the Pandavas and the Kauravas through his half-brother, Vichitravirya. .- Wikipedia contributors, 'Bhishma', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhishma> , 2022

[70] Arjuna also known as Partha and Dhananjaya, is one of the major characters of the Indian epic Mahābhārata. In the epic, he is the third among Pandavas, the five sons of Pandu. The family formed part of the royal line of the Kuru Kingdom. In the Mahābhārata War, Arjuna was a key warrior from the Pandava side and slew many warriors including Karna and Bhishma. Before the beginning of the war, his mentor, Krishna, gave him the supreme knowledge of Bhagavad Gita to overcome his moral dilemmas. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Arjuna', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arjuna>, 2022

[71] Lord Vishnu, also known as Narayana and Hari, is one of the principal deities of Hinduism. In Sanskrit language, Vishnu means 'all pervasive' while according to Medhātithi (c. 1000 CE), Vishnu means 'one who is everything and inside everything'. Lord Vishnu is the supreme being who creates, protects, and transforms the universe. Whenever the world is threatened with evil, chaos, and destructive forces, Lord Vishnu descends in the form of an avatar (incarnation) to restore the cosmic order, and protect dharma. - Wikipedia contributors, 'Vishnu', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vishnu> , 2023

[72] Flip the house or house flipping is a phenomena that involves repairing and fixing a house before reselling it for a profit.

EPILOGUE

There is a couplet by Kabir, the weaver saint of India:

*mauko kahaan dhoondhe hai re bande,
main to tere paas mein*

*na teerath mein na moorat mein,
na ekaant nivaas mein na mandir mein na masjid mein,
na kaashee kailaash mein*

*mauko kahaan dhoondhe hai re bande,
main to tere paas mein*

*Where are you trying to look for me O' man,
I am near you*

*Neither at a pilgrimage place nor in an idol,
Neither in a solitary abode, nor in the temple or at the mosque,
Neither in Kashi (a sacred place) nor at Kailash (or sacred mountain)*

*Where are you trying to look for me O' man,
I am near you*

- Saint Kabir Das

Similarly, Maa-Maharaj-ji is within us, in our hearts, not bound to any physical place outside in this world or universe.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amit Zutshi



is a spiritual seeker with keen interest in philosophies of different religions and cultures. Currently, he lives in Australia with his lovely wife Manini who is a holistic counsellor.

He believes in simple living, back to basics, loves nature and tries to live by the ideals and teachings of his Guru Maa-Maharaj-ji (Siddhi Maa and Neem Karoli Baba).

He has done Masters in Computing by Research from Monash University, Australia. He has worked in India, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, New Zealand and Australia providing technology implementation and consulting advice to various clients in the industry.

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I pay obeisance to the deities of my lineage whose grace has been on our ancestors and us.



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I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land I live and work on and recognise their continuing connection to the land and waterways. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.



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